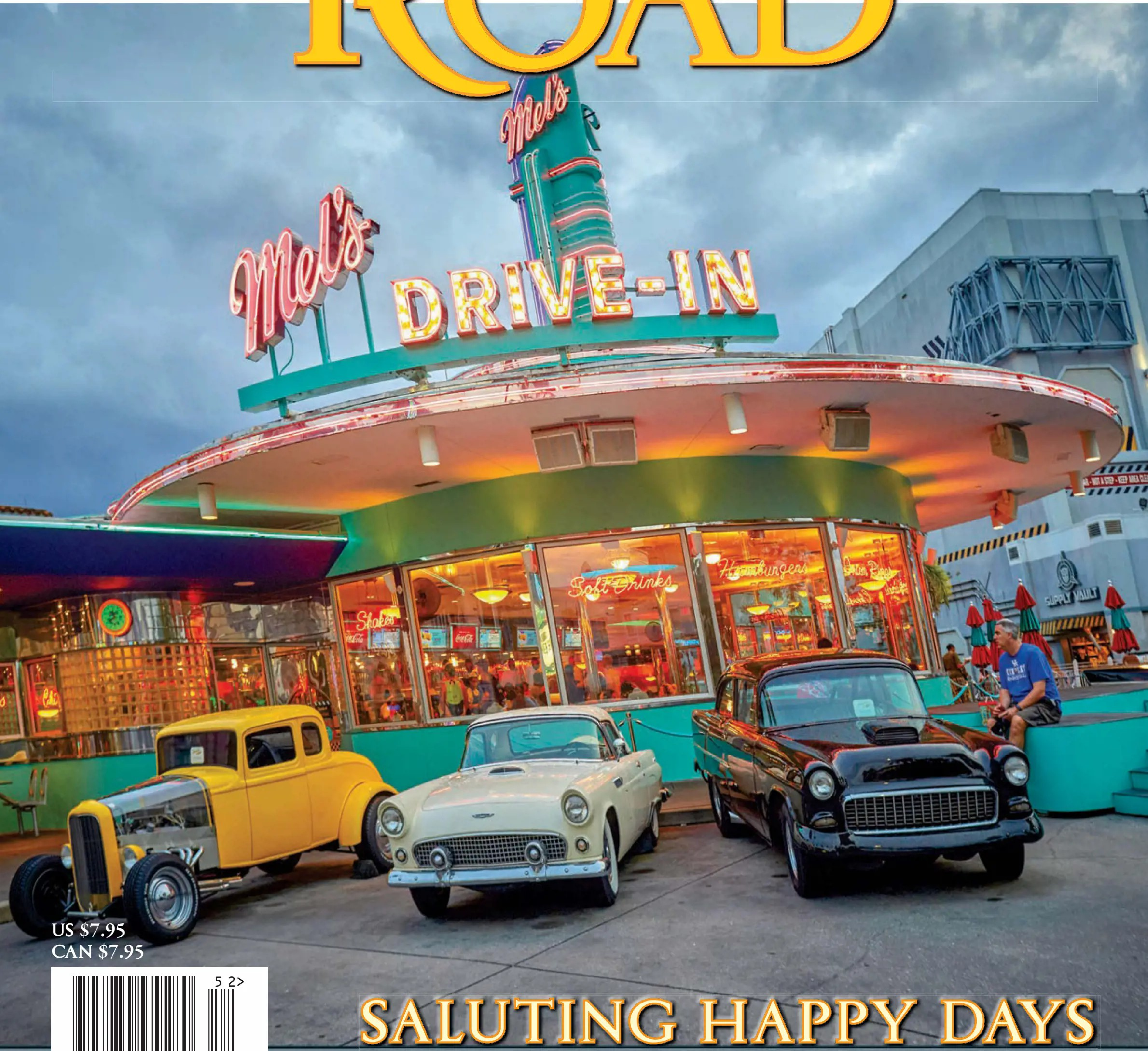
Don Most Interview  Howard Cunningham's DeSoto  The Bronze Fonz

# AMERICAN ROAD

VOLUME XXIII NUMBER 2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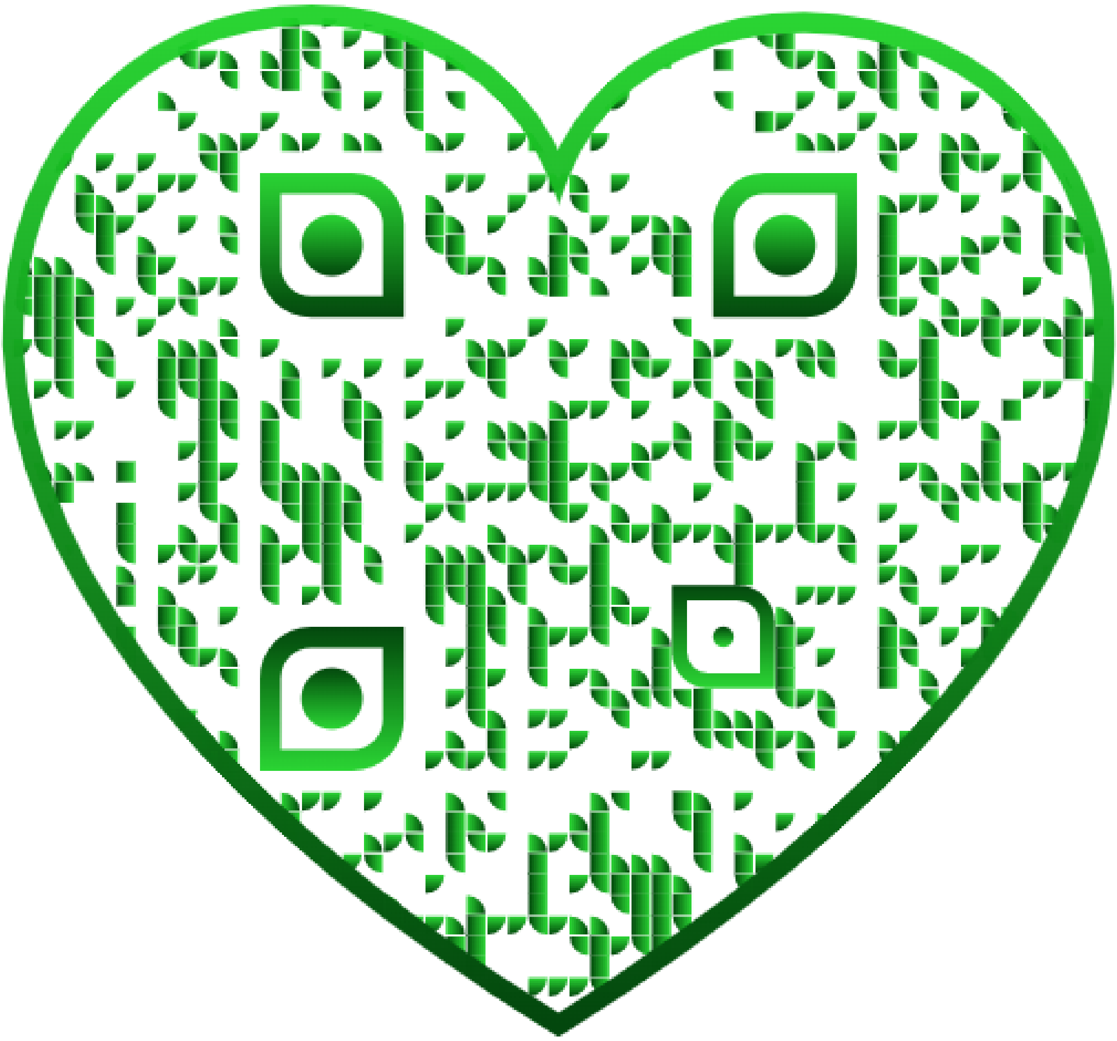

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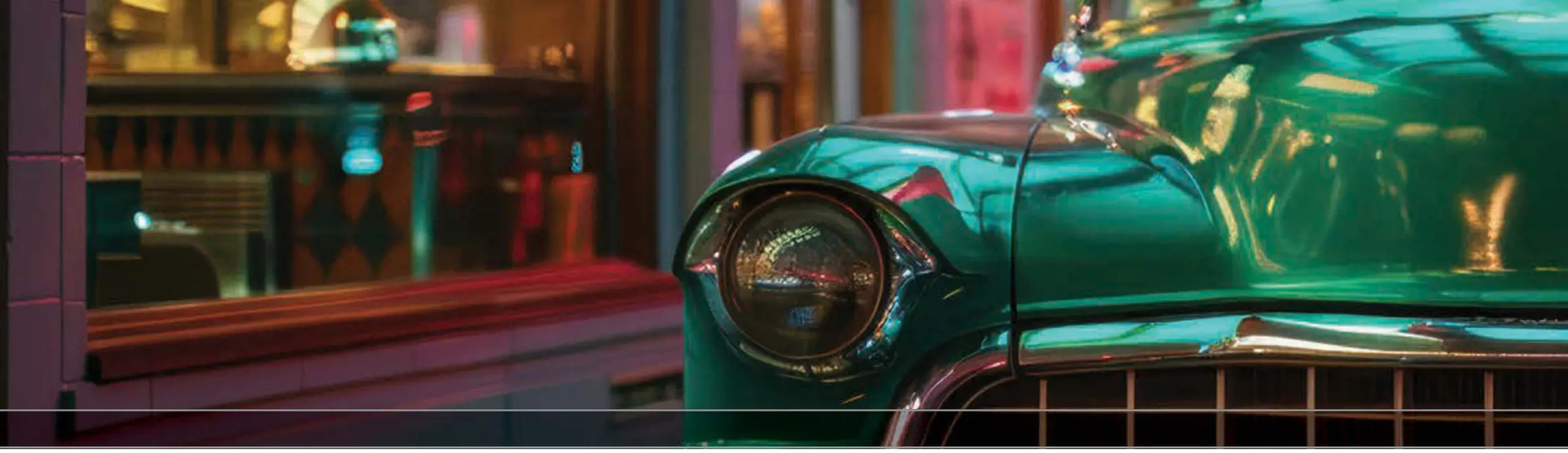

## Features

### *32* Jumping the Shark: The Story of Paradise Cove

IN 1977, THE FONZ PUT ON HIS WATERSKIS, AND EVERYONE WENT *AYYYYY!*

If you think of Malibu, the image that most likely comes to mind is one of sun-splashed blue water, pristine white sands, funky seaside cafés with surfboard signage, and tanned millionaires eating calamari. It's an image promoted on screens big and small—from the Frankie and Annette beach films through episodes of Sea Hunt—and it defined the Golden State the day Fonzie jumped the shark. • POP AMHEARST

### *56* The *American Road* Interview: Don Most

HE'S STILL GOT IT . . . AND SO MUCH MORE

Mention Don Most to nearly anyone who grew up during the 1970s, and they'll conjure an image of Ralph Malph, the fresh-faced, affable jokester he played on *Happy Days*, wearing a red jacket and pulling up in a yellow roadster at Arnold's Drive-In. Most doesn't have that vintage Ford these days, but he does have nearly everything else—including a second career as a singer of American pop standards. • INTERVIEW

### *78* *American Road*'s Happy Days Photo Contest

CELEBRATING GREAT TRAVELS WITH GREAT PICTURES

For our magazine's Summer 2025 photography contest, we asked entrants to send us images taken during their travels that radiate with an aura of good times. They responded by showing us just how many smiles hide in the miles. • PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST RESULTS.

## Departments

### *48* US 30: Tracing the Oregon Trail

"National Neon"

The ENTRANCE sign at the National Neon Museum once directed travelers to the ticket area of St. Louis' grand Union Station. Today it points tourists through a door in The Dalles, Oregon, and into a world of relit marquees collected from sea to shining sea. • MATTHEW ANDERSON

### *72* US 99: The Road to Oz

"The Cunningham DeSoto"

*Happy Days*' Howard Cunningham was the all-American dad. He was a man of hardware and wisdom, and the owner of a beloved 1948 DeSoto Custom Suburban that is today in Tacoma, Washington—a star car of the LeMay Collections at Marymount. • ANDERSEN EMENDING

### *92* America's Playgrounds

"Inspiration Point"

Is Inspiration Point all about smooching? Maybe. But it is also the high point of a crackerjack hike into California's San Gabriel Mountains. Go for spectacular views and the Echo Phone—and bring your sweetheart along. • JESS WINFIELD

### *102* The Extra Mile

"Laverne & Shirley's Brewery"

Ready to "Schlemiel" and "Schlimazel" *Laverne-and-Shirley*-style? Hop, skip, or hopscotch over to Milwaukee's Lakefront Brewery and take a tour. The bottling line you'll see is the one featured in the show, and it's still slapping caps on Cream City's best suds. • BOB CURLEY

32

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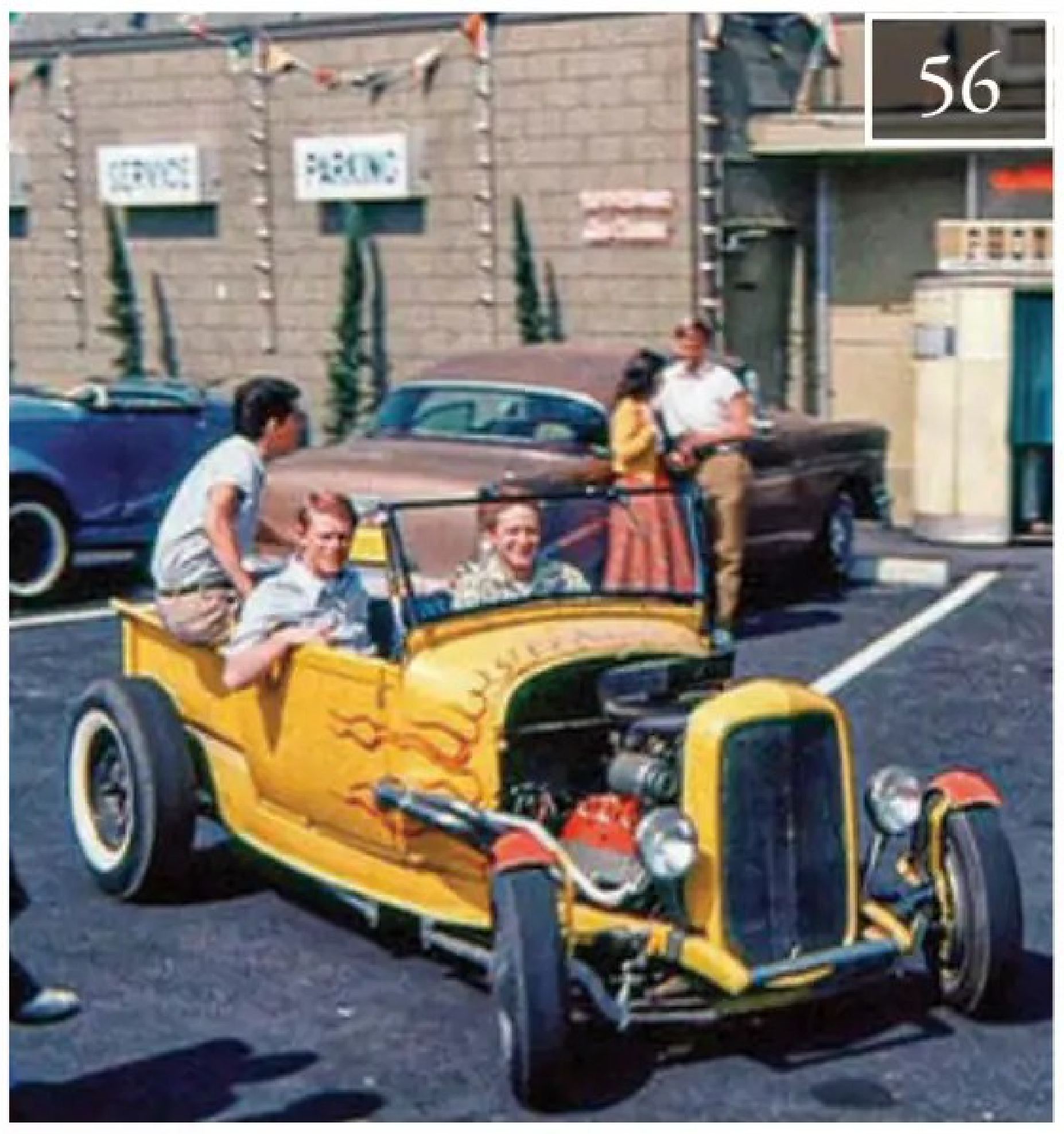
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VOLUME XXIII NUMBER 2 • SUMMER 2025

# AMERICAN ROAD

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## Stop-Overs

*14* **Memory Motel**
When was the last time you checked into a vintage motel to discover Magic Fingers by your bedside and a MoonPie on your pillow? Odds say it was likely the last time you enjoyed a stay at the Roadrunner Lodge of Tucumcari, New Mexico. • MARK VERNARELLI

*44* **Think Big!**
Bill Haley and his Comets were late for the studio the day they recorded "Rock Around the Clock." Legend says they may have been hurried along by the Colgate clock, a towering timepiece that's still knocking off the minutes above the Hudson River. • KARRAS STRASBURG

*68* **Diner Days**
Richie Cunningham always said he found his thrill on Blueberry Hill. In 1972, St. Louis restaurateur Joe Edwards discovered the excitement for himself, courtesy of one vintage Seeburg jukebox and a collection of thirty thousand 45 rpm records. • STACY BOSCO

*88* **Another Roadside Attraction**
It's not often that we can give an attraction two thumbs up, but the Bronze Fonz deserves the gesture. Where else but the Milwaukee riverfront can you find a life-size sculpture of Henry Winkler in his signature leather jacket? • LEEDA TURPIN

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LAKEFRONT
MILWAUKEE
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## Roadside

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"Happy Days"

*10* **Write-of-Way**
Letters from Our Readers

*11* **Who's Driving? Contest**

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Hot Springs Holds Annual Splish-Splash Dash • World Chicken Festival Crowns a New Colonel • "Go Jump Off a Bridge!" Says West Virginia

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*26* ***American Road* Sweepstakes**

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"Riding with Mr. C"

# EDITOR'S RAMBLER

## "Happy Days"

Where were your thumbs in 1975?

If you're like me, you can answer that question with the coolest of confidence: My thumbs were pointing perpetually upward—at right angles to the floor, on level with the nearest juke box, and parallel to the comb I kept in my back pocket. They were locked in that rigid position because I—along with almost every other adolescent in America—was obsessed with emulating Fonzie on *Happy Days*.

Tuesday nights at eight o'clock saw families nationwide gathered in front of their television sets to watch the newest episode of that hit 1950s-centered series. As portrayed by actor Henry Winkler, Arthur "The Fonz" Fonzarelli wasn't simply the show's breakout character; he was a ducktailed phenomenon—a craze in a leather jacket that inspired us kids to stick out our thumbs and say "Ayyyyy!" over and over. We said "Ayyyyy!" to our teachers when we arrived at school in the mornings. We said "Ayyyyy!" to our parents when they tucked us in at night. We said "Sit on it!" to our siblings who told us to stop strutting around and saying "Ayyyyy!" to everybody all day. Our coolness would not be quelled. And sure as Joanie grew to love Chachi, we knew we were cool because Fonzie was.

Looking back at that *Happy Days* mania, I'm struck by the romance behind it. The series tapped into the same widespread nostalgia that sparked popular interest in Route 66 a full decade later—a yearning for yesterday fueled by post-war memories of sleek cars and sock hops, neon nights and ageless lives. *Happy Days* was aimed at adults who missed the idealism of their youth. It earned its record ratings by convincing kids born in the 1960s that the 1950s could have been the best decade of their lives.

This issue of *American Road* pays tribute to the series and the impacts it made on pop culture. It's a nostalgic number played with doo-wops that takes to the highways with the oomph of a Triumph motorcycle roaring toward Arnold's Drive-In. It begins with a flashback to that most famous episode of *Happy Days*—the 1977 juggernaut that saw Fonzie slip waterskis onto his feet and jump a great white shark in West Coast waters. The episode was filmed at Paradise Cove in Malibu—a strand of golden sand that has long defined how California sees itself and, by extension, how the rest of the country sees California. We stop by to lose ourselves amid the surfboards and production stills—scenes from the Frankie and Annette "Beach Party" films, the Beach Boys' "Surfin' Safari," and even an episode of *The Munsters* that saw a snorkeling Herman snagged in the fishing nets of a Russian trawler. Talk about must-see TV.

Actor Don Most is best known for his *Happy Days* role of Ralph Malph—a teenage cut-up who drove a yellow Ford highboy and capped the punchline of every stale joke with the self-compliment "I still got it!" Most is still acting, and he's made for himself a second career as a pop and jazz singer. We visit with him in our *American Road* Interview. He talks about the old days, the new days, and that time he shot a movie inside a concrete teepee at the funky Wigwam Motel in San Bernardino.

The results of our Happy Days Photo Contest are sure to add a grin to wherever you're going. Our departments broaden that smile. We track down Howard Cunningham's 1948 DeSoto in Washington State, drop by the National Neon Museum in Oregon, and seek out Laverne & Shirley's old bottling line at Wisconsin's Lakefront Brewery. We find our thrill at Blueberry Hill in St. Louis, rock around the clock with Bill Haley and His Comets on the banks of the Hudson River, and finally find ourselves at the thumbs of the Bronze Fonz on Milwaukee's waterfront.

Here's hoping our efforts earn two thumbs up from you— for today and for 1975.

There will be no second coming of Fonzie. Television viewership is too fractured in our times, and the national character too angry to rally round such a wholesome hero again. But nostalgia is bigger than ever, and those of us who were once cool in grade school have never quite lost our swagger. I still possess my old *Happy Days* lunch box—the now-vintage pail with Fonzie on its front standing beside his beloved bike and jabbing his unconquerable thumb into the air.

"Ayyyyy!" I can't help but say to myself every time it catches my eye.

I still got it.

Thomas Repp

*Editorial Director*

**ON OUR WINDSHIELD:** Mel's Diner at Universal Studios evokes the feeling of *Happy Days*. Photo © Mark Waugh. [Opposite] The Bronze Fonz give two thumbs up on the Milwaukee waterfront. For more about him, see page 88. Photo © Jeremy Lushewitz.

AMERICAN ROAD

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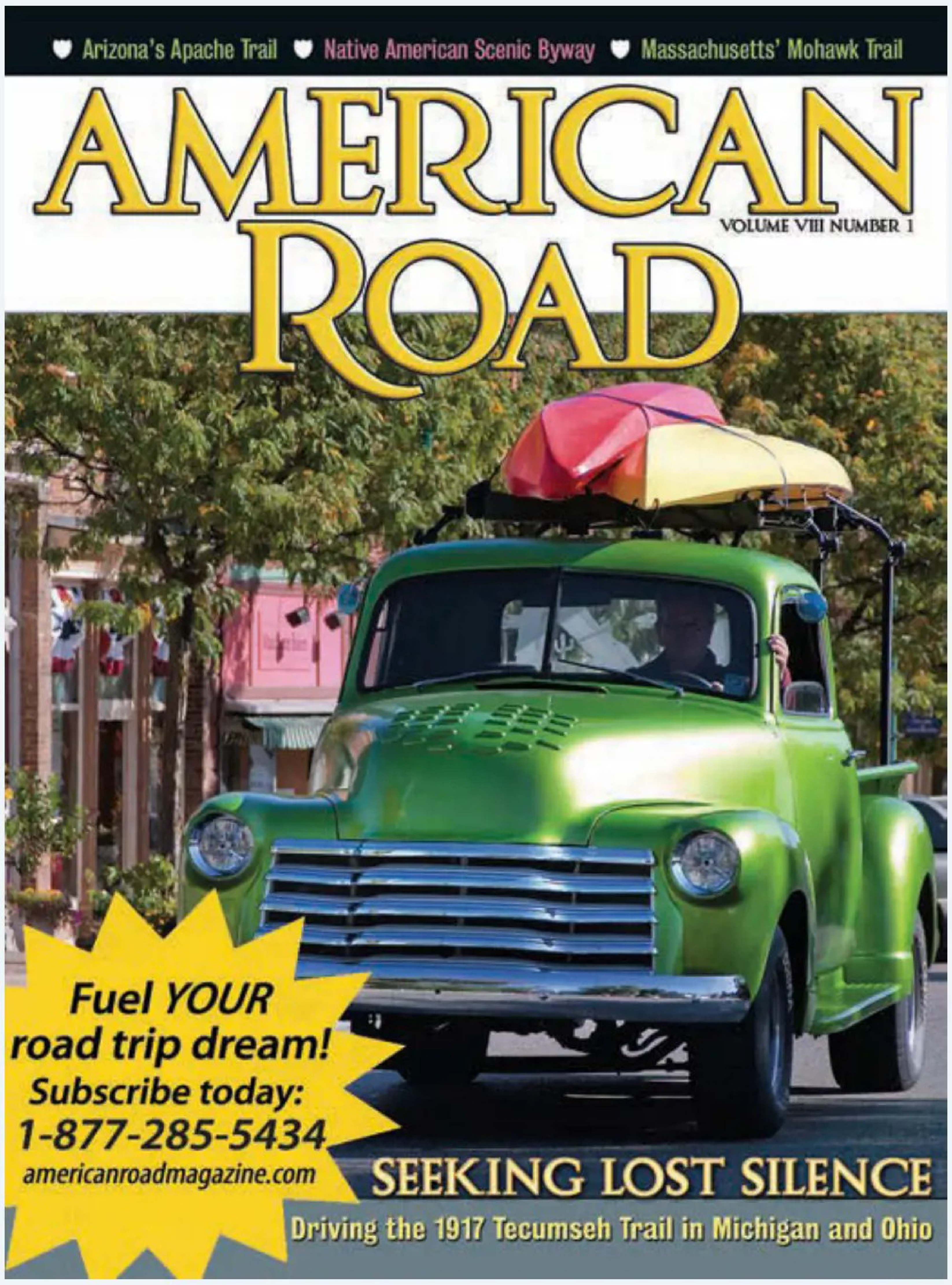

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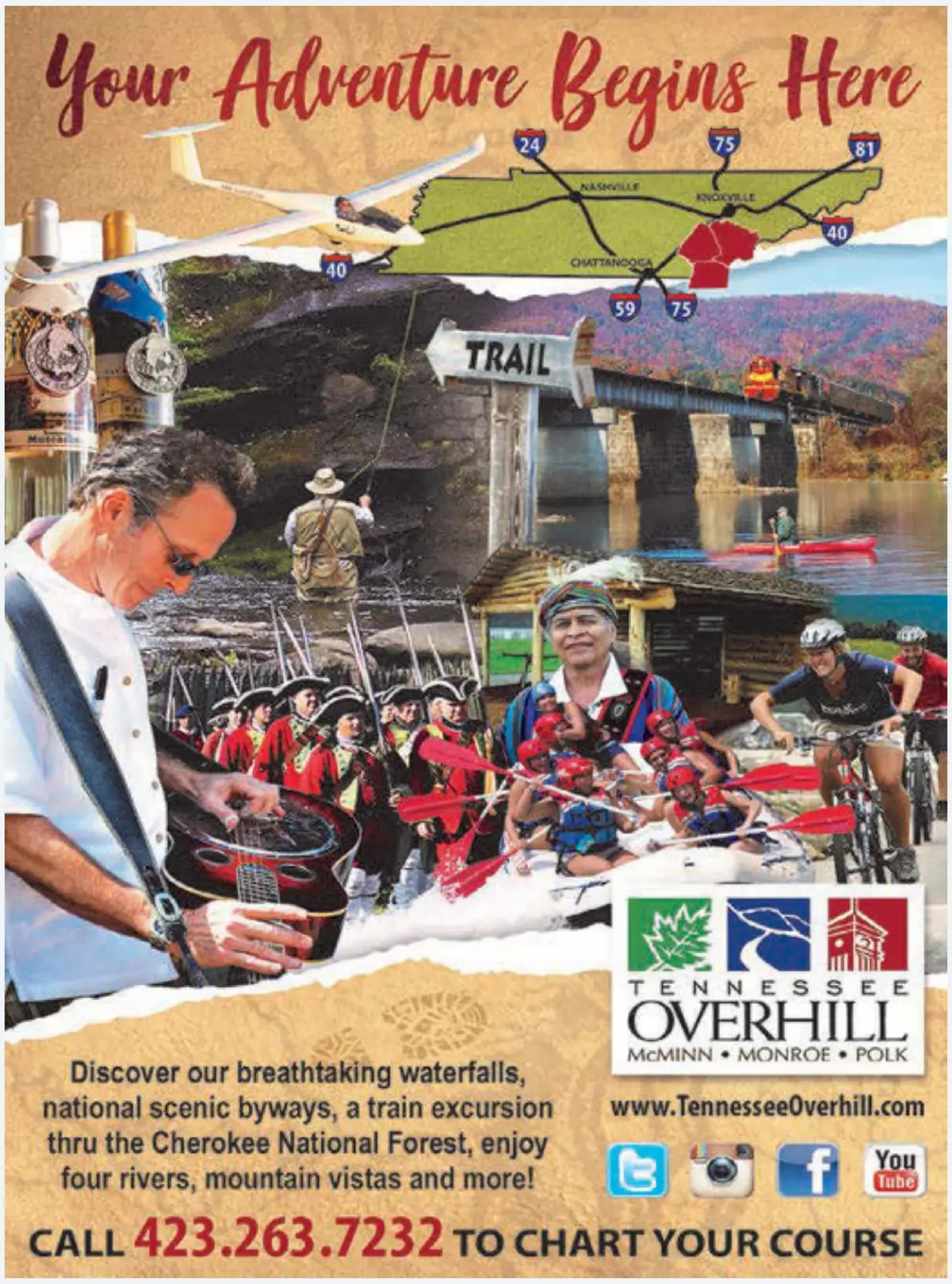

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## KINGMAN BRINGS MEMORIES HOME

We visited Kingman Arizona the other day and really had a great time. The old power plant turned into a Route 66 museum is really cool. Veterans get in free and I liked that. Since my wife and I were born in the 1950s, a lot of the content of the museum really hit home. I remember someone in my family having a car with an air conditioner that hung on the passenger window and there was a car in this museum with that same setup. Also, the canvas bag hanging on the front of the truck radiator for water reminded me of when my wife and I lived in the Mojave desert at 29 Palms in the 80s—we had one of those. I was surprised at the number of electric vehicles in the basement and how far back they go. There were dozens of electric vehicles, including race cars.

We also saw the “Angel” exhibit that you wrote about in a recent edition of *American Road*. It made me wish I had a chance to speak with the real Angel Delgadillo.

Overall, this place was a gem along with the rest of the town and other places Route 66 oriented.

Kramer Mack
Eugene, Oregon

## WOOLWORTH’S RESTORATION

I thought the editorial team at *American Road* would be interested to learn that the 1949 Woolworth’s building located on 19th Street in Bakersfield, California, is being restored. Plans call for it to be returned as closely as possible to its original appearance—with the intention of achieving status on the National Register of Historic Places.

The new opening date is expected to be sometime during 2025. I understand that the people involved in completing the restoration also plan to include an expanded food counter.

When I visited the place, I ordered a burger and milkshake at their vintage lunch counter. It sure brought back memories. As a little girl, I remember going to the Woolworth’s with my mom. Whenever we went, I knew we were in for a special treat! I would love to read a 5 & Dime feature article.

Susie Bivans
Lamont, California

*Thank you for your letter, Susie. We have toyed with the idea of building an issue around a theme of five and dime stores. Let us sit down with a plate of Frito Pie and try to figure it out.*

## FOR THE BIRDS

I’ve always been a fan of films made by Alfred Hitchcock—even when I was a kid and his movies would scare the daylights out of me. I remember watching a rerun of *Psycho* (1960) on WKBD Channel 50 in Detroit, then tried to avoid taking a shower for a week. I saw *Frenzy* (1972) when it first came out in theatres and couldn’t sleep for a week. I think I drove my parents nuts.

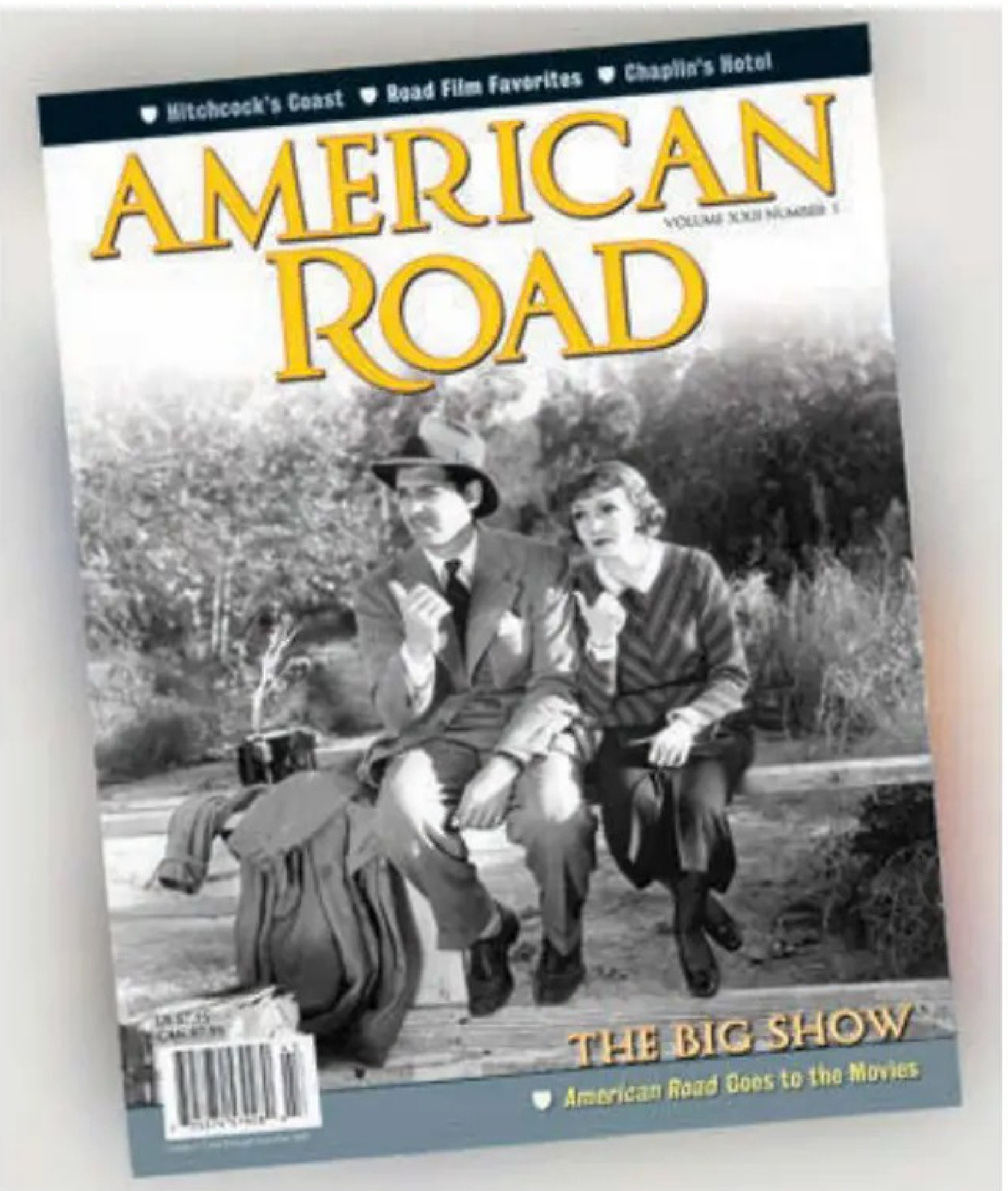
My favorite Hitchcock movie has always been *The Birds* (1963). That’s why I am writing. I read your story about *The Birds* in your recent issue (Autumn 2024) of *American Road*. That article made me realize that—although I’ve seen the movie a hundred times—I never thought to find out where it was filmed! (I guess I have been too freaked out by all the gore and suspense to think about that.) But now that I know the school shown in the movie is actually in [Bodega] California, I plan to see it this coming winter. I am hoping I can find a store nearby that sells souvenirs from *The Birds*. Wish me luck. I hope I find that the seagulls are a lot friendlier than they are in the film!

Brad Turnst
Rochester Hill, Michigan

**POWER BREAK:** A 1951 Studebaker Champion shines below a vintage Texaco star in the Arizona Route 66 Museum in Kingman, Arizona.

TEXACO
EXIT
VALLEY BANK
SLOW DOWN, PA
ROUTE
US
66

Photo courtesy Wayne Hsieh.


Hitchcock's Coast ■ Road Film Favorites ■ Chaplin's Hotel
AMERICAN ROAD
THE BIG SHOW
American Road Goes to the Movies

**THAT'S A WRAP!** Our Autumn 2024 issue paid homage to movies on the move—from Alfred Hitchcock's 1969 airbourne thriller *The Birds* to the Marx Brothers' 1949 overlooked frontier comedy *Go West*.

## AT THE MOVIES

I enjoyed your recent movie-themed issue, and, in particular, your article about great road movies. I agree with almost all of the films on your list, and I am a very big fan of all the *Smokey and the Bandit* movies. A couple of films I would have added are *Cannonball Run* and *Two-Lane Blacktop*. And what about the Beatles' movie *Magical Mystery Tour*? If it doesn't have a great plot, at least the songs are fab—especially to an old hippie like me!

Cy Wilkens
Los Angeles, California

Hey guys, I just got around to looking at this Autumn 2024 issue of *American Road*. I savor your magazine like a fine wine. And, as a know-it-all, I need to tell you that you left out one great travel movie from your list of terrific road films: *Interstate 60* starring Gary Oldman. But thanks for your list. I wasn't familiar with *Highway 61*. I will check it out.

Doug Klinkebiel
Albany, Oregon

## FROM SWEDEN WITH LOVE

Five friends and I are planning a road trip in the US next year. We're all in our late twenties and have relatively flexible jobs, so we don't necessarily have to travel during the summer months.

Previously, we've been to New York City and Florida. In Florida, we enjoyed the road trip experience, especially Key West.

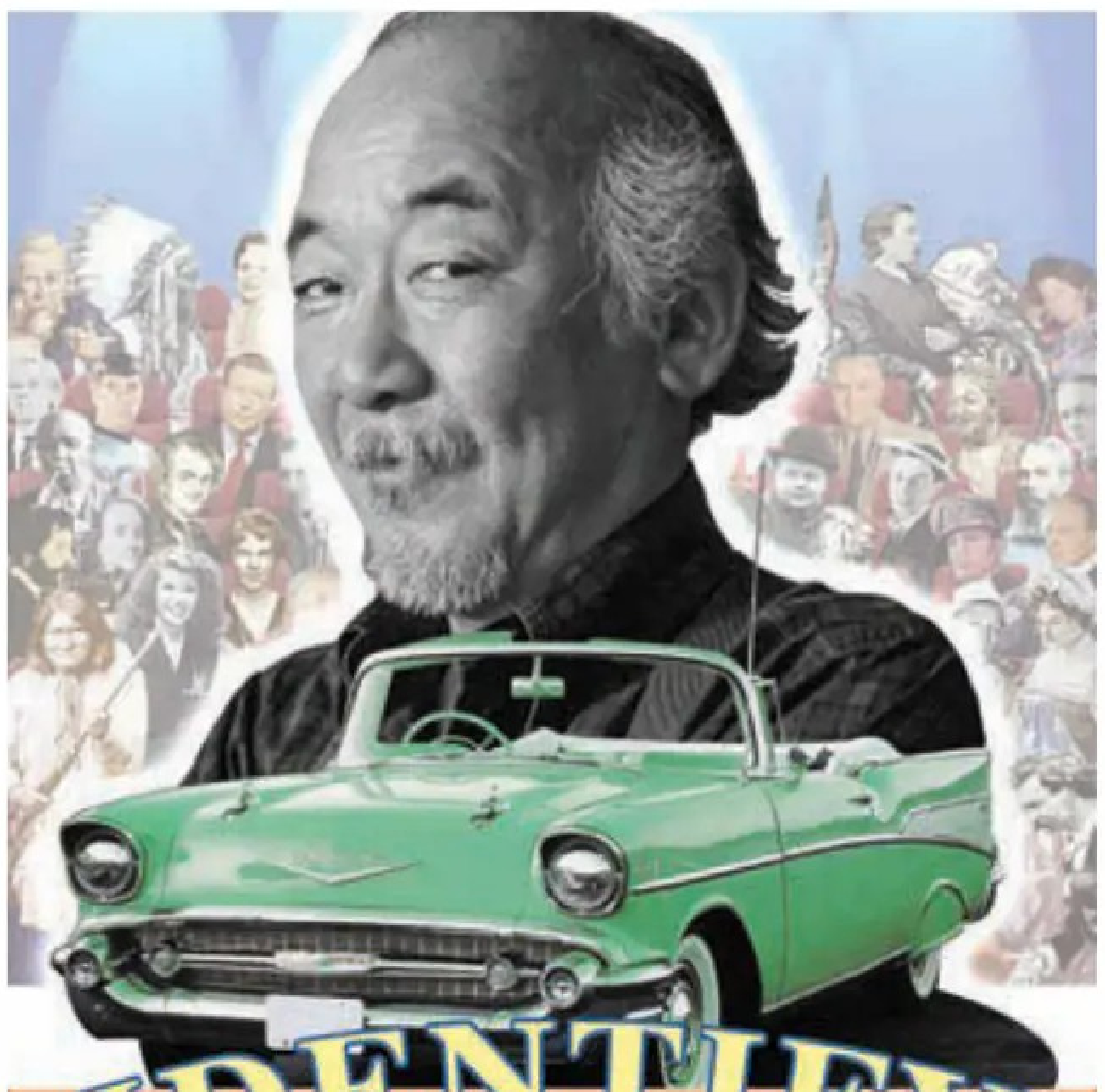
Now, we'd like to cover longer distances and plan to be away for three to four weeks. One option for a trip seems to be Route 66, starting in Chicago and ending in L.A.

Regarding timing, we were in Miami last July, which worked well, although five to eight degrees Celsius cooler wouldn't have hurt. Do you recommend any specific month?

Feel free to share tips on accommodations, activities, and other things to do. If we choose Route 66, we've thought about visiting Chicago, taking a detour to Nashville, heading towards Arizona, Las Vegas, and finally LA. We're also considering San Francisco. We don't need a lot of partying; we prefer smaller towns with less nightlife to experience more of the American culture—which we love!

Erica Ingtrand
Sweden

*Greetings, Erica. We have too many recommendations to share in the space allotted to us in the answer of a letter. That's why we have been publishing* American Road *for twenty-three years. But in short response to your plans, we will say that we advise you to stick with Route 66 for its entire length and visit the larger cities off its path separately. The Mother Road will show you small-town America with all its charms. Drive the length of it.*



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LAST ROUND'S ANSWER!

Davy Crockett (who was played by actor Fess Parker in the 1950s Disney series was born in Limestone, Tennessee, and came to be defined by his coonskin cap. He died at the Alamo in 1836. **CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR WINNER CYNTHIA ROBINSON OF OWINGS MILLS, MARYLAND!**

**(1) YOU'RE GOING TO NEED A BIGGER BATH:** Coming into the 2024 Running of the Tubs, the Riser Ford Lincoln Sharks [above] had won five championship titles, but they were bested in the recent competition by the Spa Pacers. That bites.

## HOT SPRINGS HOLDS ANNUAL SPLISH-SPLASH DASH

**HOT SPRINGS, Ark.**—Every June for nearly two decades, Hot Springs, Arkansas—the historic resort town known for its thermal waters that bills itself as "America's Spa"—celebrates its heritage of intense bathing by holding the Stueart Pennington World Championship Running of the Tubs. The contest is an intense race that invites costumed teams to push customized bathtubs on wheels down famous Bathhouse Row.

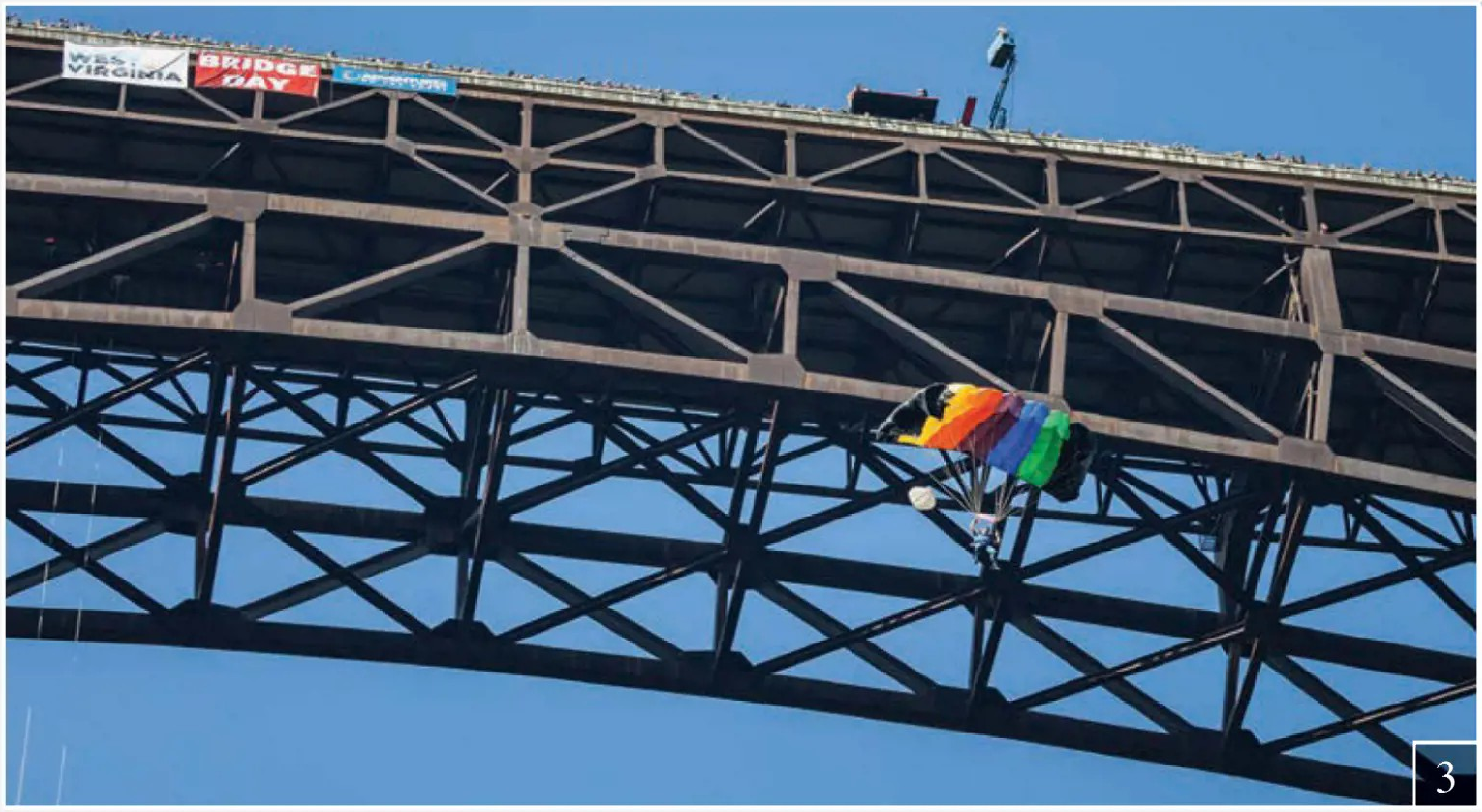
The tubs must be full of water at the start of the race and have at least ten gallons remaining at the finish. Spectators carrying squirt guns are encouraged to spray participants with copious amounts of water as they fly by. Judges make up new rules as the race progresses. It's wild, it's crazy, and it's wet…very wet.

WILDCAT
World Chicken Festival
SaM
2

**(2) ORIGINAL OR EXTRA CRISPY?** Colonel Harland Sanders look-a-likes took center stage at the 2024 World Chicken Festival. The Kentucky Fried winner was young Maverick Broussard (seen at far right), who hails from Corbin, Kentucky.

## WORLD CHICKEN FESTIVAL CROWNS A NEW COLONEL

**LONDON, Ky.**—Though Hurricane Helene tried to wash out the World Chicken Festival, high winds couldn't blow away Kentuckians' taste for fried bird. Despite attendance being down a fowl 60 percent, festival-goers gobbled up three thousand pounds of chicken fried in the world's biggest skillet during the four-day event. Not even KFC's Colonel Sanders himself could've cooked up such a storm! The real clucking highlight? The crowning of 8-year-old little Maverick in the annual Colonel Sanders impersonator contest. All this wing-flapping took place in London, home to Sanders Café—the Colonel's original restaurant—now a chicken museum containing a full-service KFC.



**(3) ONE-DAY SAIL:** An adventurous spirit takes flight at the annual Bridge Day base jump, descending gracefully towards the river below. The impressive New River Gorge Bridge is 876 feet high and 3,030 feet long.

## "GO JUMP OFF A BRIDGE!" SAYS WEST VIRGINIA

**NEW RIVER GORGE, W.V.**—On August 17, 1979, two hundred spectators watched Army veteran Burton Ervin parachute off the recently completed, 876-foot-high New River Gorge Bridge. The onlookers were thrilled, but authorities were not. Powers-that-be moved to ban the practice. But Ervin lobbied to have BASE jumping sanctioned as a one-day, annual event. Bridge Day launched the following year.

Last October, some 130,000 people watched 325 BASE jumpers safely make 755 gravity-impeded leaps from the span. Many landed in the water, where rescue crafts picked them up. We are told the view on the way down is beautiful, especially if you look up: The New River Gorge Bridge boasts the longest steel span in the western hemisphere.

Photo 1 courtesy Visit Hot Springs. Photo 2 courtesy World Chicken Festival. Photo 3 © Wirestock.

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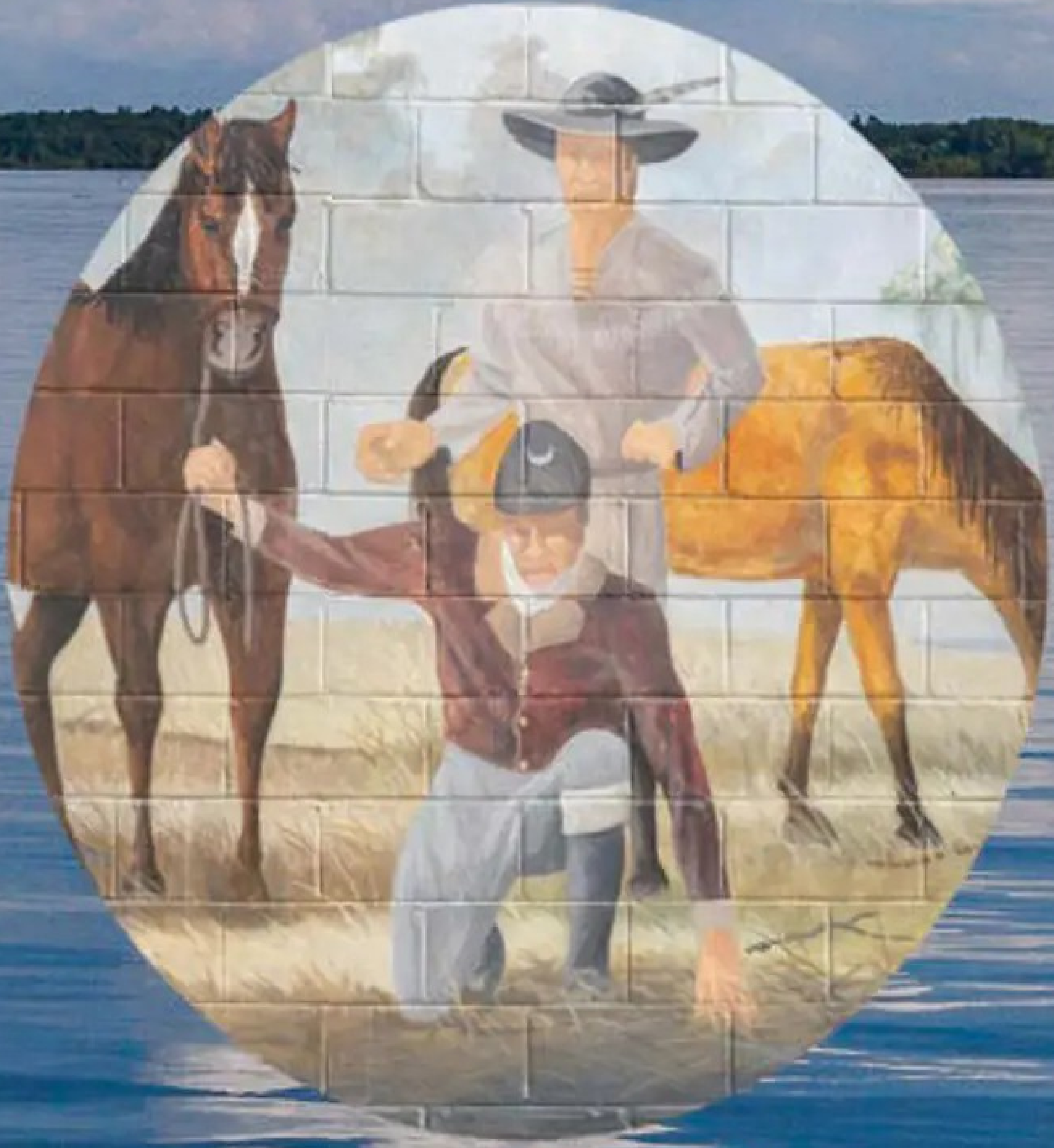

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## Roadrunner Lodge
## Tucumcari, New Mexico

Anyone who has ever watched a classic Roadrunner cartoon knows that the speedy Looney Tunes bird leads a charmed life. He races across long Southwestern highways with the wind in his crest and hardly a care in the world. The scenery he passes is stunning. And every time he slows down and trundles into town, he finds a free MoonPie waiting for him in his motel room.

Hold on.... That doesn't seem right.... We may be conflating that bit about the MoonPie with the treat guests find when they check into New Mexico's Roadrunner Lodge. But we're hardly to blame for that. These MoonPies are downright delicious, and when we've got one in hand, you can hardly expect us to correctly recall everything about some screwy old cartoon.

What we can say with certainty is that the Roadrunner Lodge is full of nostalgia and surprises, and, if you book a stay, you can't help but find a free MoonPie in your room because owner David Brenner places the wrapped snack there himself.

Brenner is a lifelong tech guy, and that's a little odd to record because the vibe at the Roadrunner Lodge is all about yesterday. It's defined by vintage decor, oldies music piped into rooms, and, sometimes, vibrating beds.

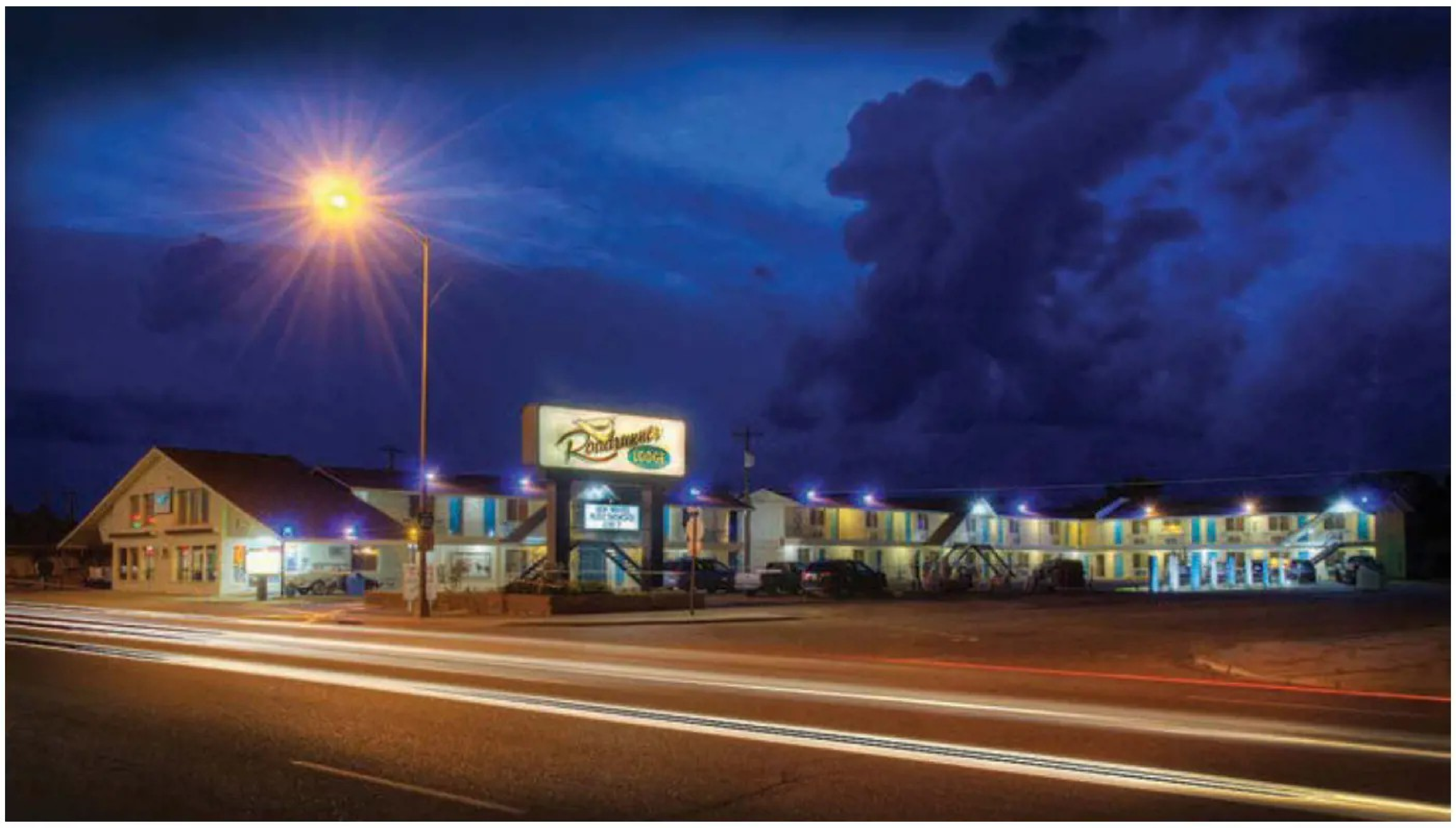
Brenner bought the business a little over ten years ago, after stumbling across it in Tucumcari, a town of about five thousand that grew up around the old Rock Island Railroad and Route 66. In the beginning, the Roadrunner was a pair of dilapidated motels—La Plaza Court (constructed circa 1947) and the Leatherwood Manor (established in 1964)—which at some point in the past had been joined under one roof to operate as a single establishment. Brenner bought the whole of it, gave it its Roadrunner name, and set out to get the place up and running again.

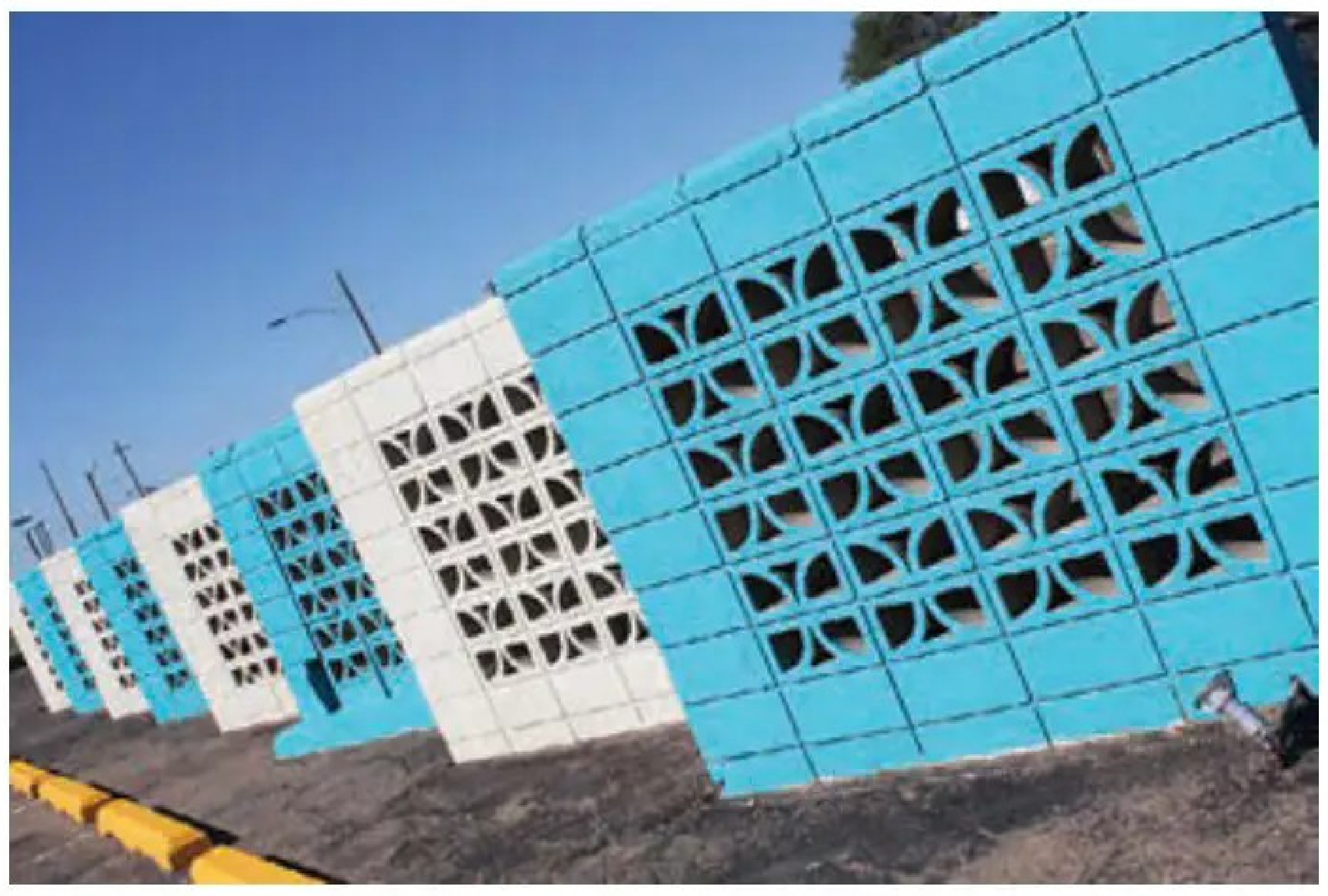
"The property was not operating when we first laid eyes on it," Brenner says. "And it needed a crazy amount of renovation work." For months, he and his missus patched and painted, replaced doors and windows, installed new flooring and beds. There was never a question they wanted the lodge to look retro. They picked out Formica patterns and bought lighting fixtures from vendors that recreated vintage styles. "It was a true labor of love for both of us, creating a nostalgic experience for our guests, looking for ways to transport them back in time," Brenner says.

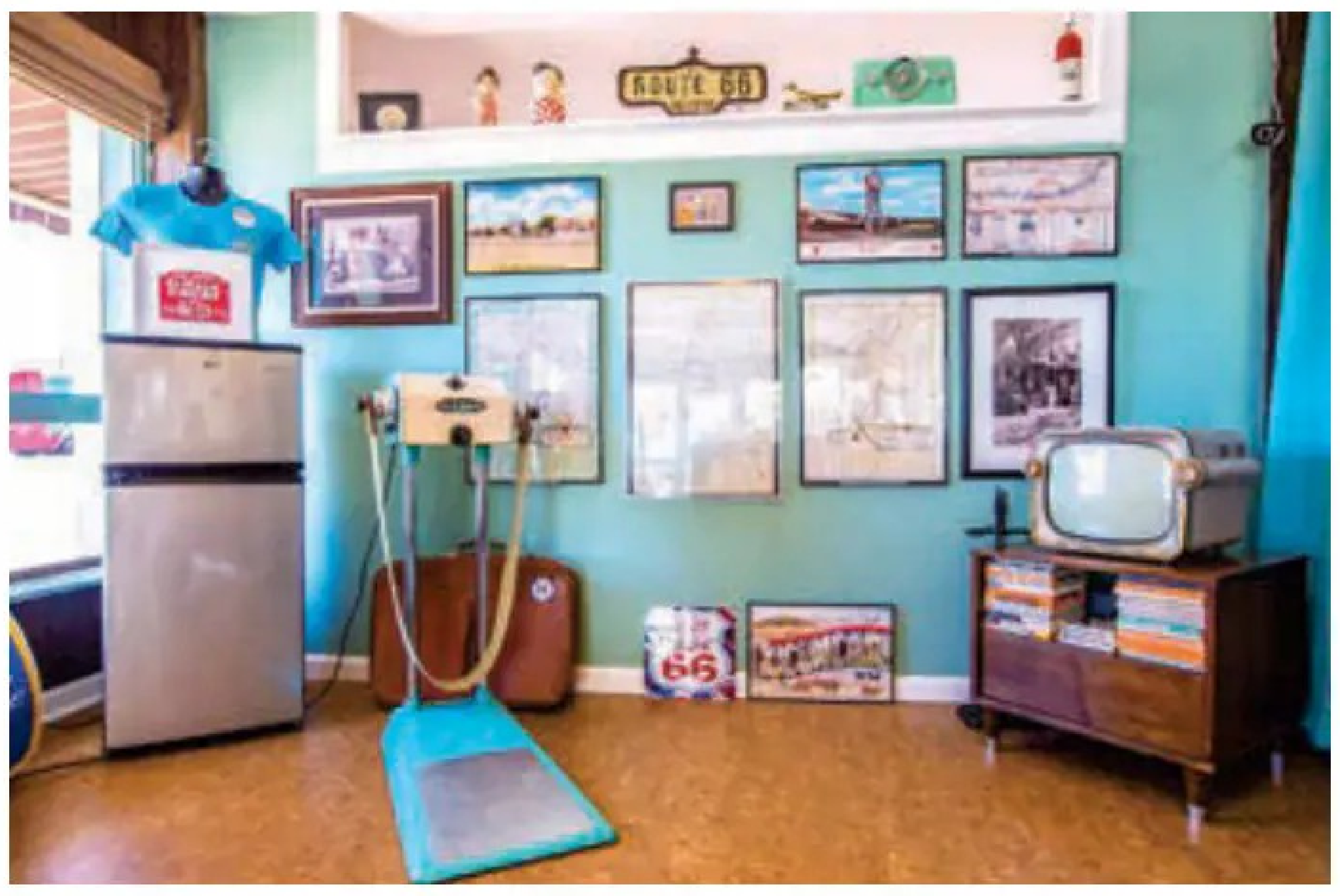
And that aim was achieved admirably—right down to the songs on the radio available to the sentimental ear of any guest. The Roadrunner of today boasts its own short-range radio station, which pipes in 1950s and 1960s music to all rooms, complete with commercials of the era. A little dab might do ya, as you slick on your Brylcreem in the morning, but chances are, you'll want to listen to a lot more.

The Original Marshmallow Sandwich
Moon Pie
since 1917

**MOON SHOTS:** [Left] Overnight guests arriving at the Roadrunner Lodge find complimentary MoonPies awaiting them in their rooms. [Below] Come midnight, the Roadrunner lights up the dark sky with warmth and a glow that shines right out of yesterday.







Roadrunner Lodge • 1023 East Route 66 Boulevard • Tucumcari, New Mexico 88401 • (575) 282-7866 • roadrunnerlodge.com

BY **MARK VERNARELLI**

The Roadrunner Lodge even contains a few "Snazzy 60s" suites, which offer travelers what Brenner describes as a "premium experience with ultra-nostalgic touches." These rooms are outfitted with retro furniture and bric-a-brac. On a hip table, one might even find a high school yearbook dating from the Summer of Love. And dig those turquoise tiles in the bathrooms.

Roadrunner guests who are particularly lucky may find their groovy room equipped with a vibrating bed. When Brenner opened his lodge for business ten years ago, he installed vintage Magic Fingers Vibrating Bed massager units throughout. He admits that most of those devices have since "lost their oomph or quit altogether," but one or two of the boxes are still kicking out the jiggles. Vibrating bed massagers were the rage in the late 1950s. At their peak, a quarter-million units found their way into motel rooms from coast to coast. Brenner is on a quest to locate operating machines and bring them back into use at the lodge.

In the meantime, other good vibrations keep the Roadrunner moving. Guests sit down to play vintage board games. Brenner spends a lot of time around the fire soaking up their stories. "We had a guy," he recalls, "who said he chose us because he had a 1969 Plymouth Roadrunner. Of course he just *had* to stay at the Roadrunner."

No word if that fellow passed a Looney Tunes cuckoo on his way into town, racing the other way and carrying off a free MoonPie. We only know that *beeping* bird had better not touch ours.

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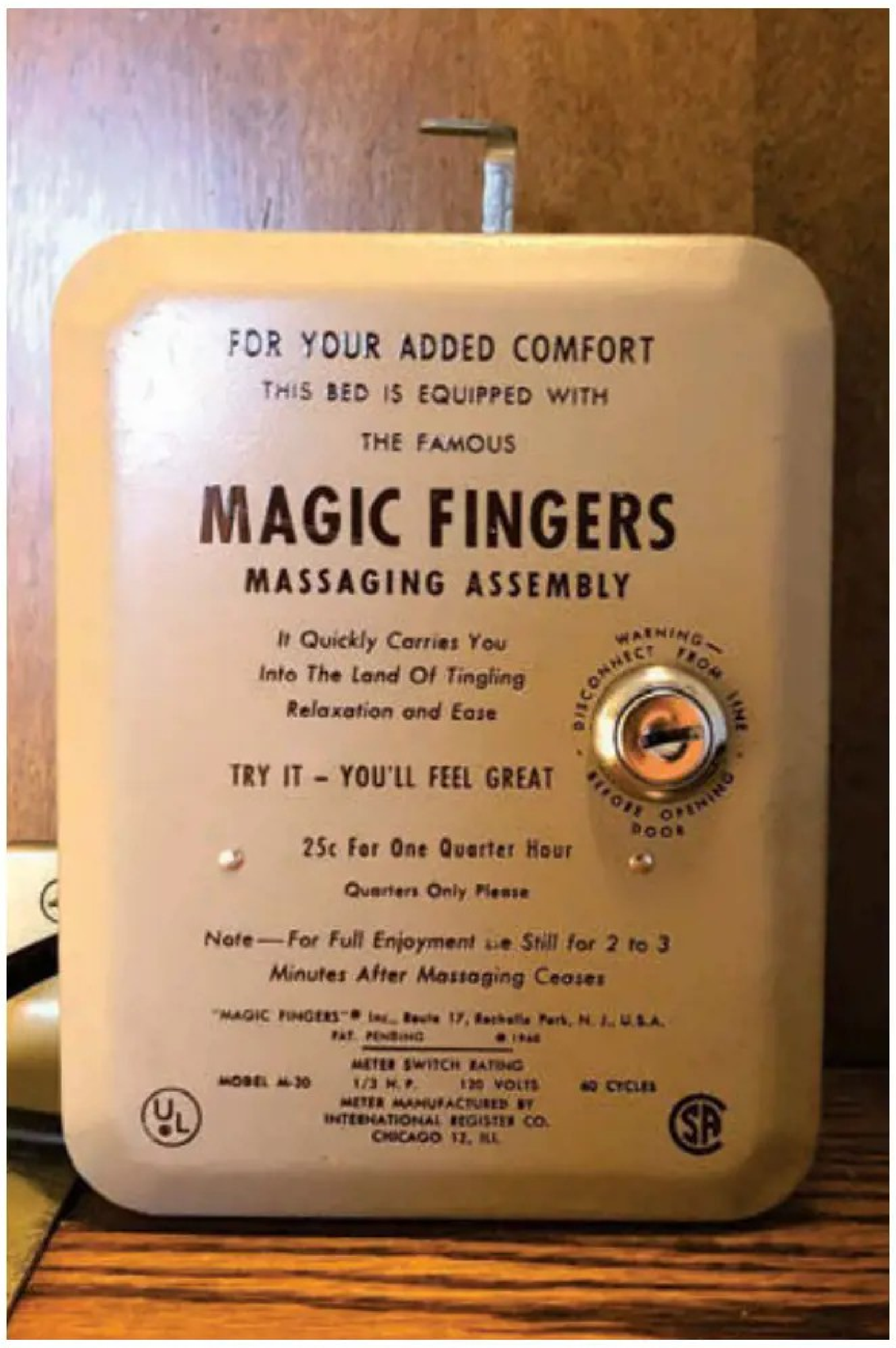
**MARK VERNARELLI** is a Maryland-based writer and a Department Editor at AMERICAN ROAD.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Note—For Full Enjoyment Lie Still for 2 to 3
Minutes After Massaging Ceases

**RETRO VIBES:** [Above] Achy from long days driving Route 66? The Roadrunner Lodge can cure the pains that ail with its Magic Fingers machines. The classic massagers, so commonly found in motels of the 1960s and 1970s, vibrate mattresses to soothe sore travelers to sleep at a quarter a pop.

Roadrunner
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1960S SWANK
ON
ROUT
HOWARD'S
MOBILE TIRE
SERVICE
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Premium bedding

Images courtesy Roadrunner Lodge.

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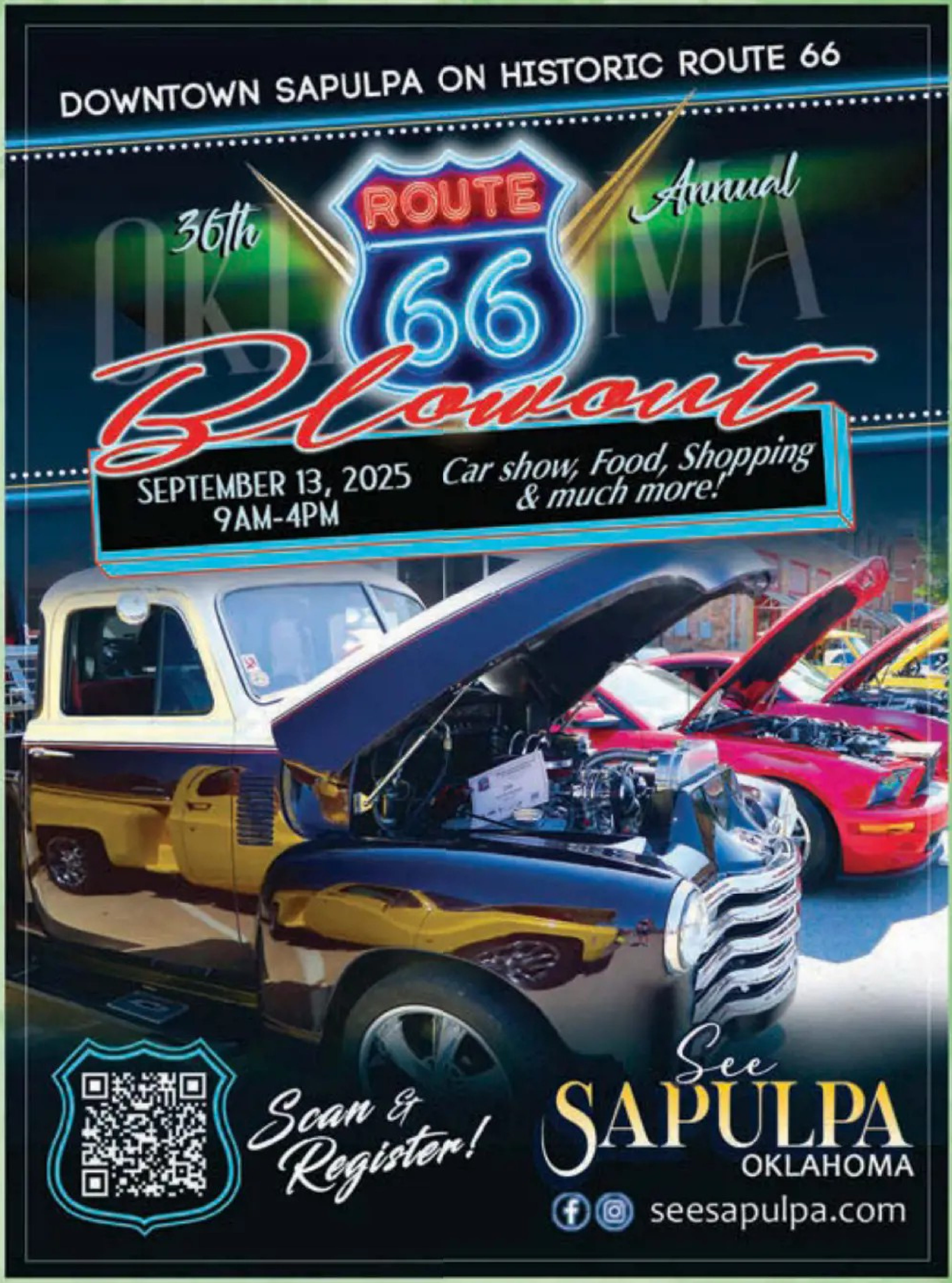

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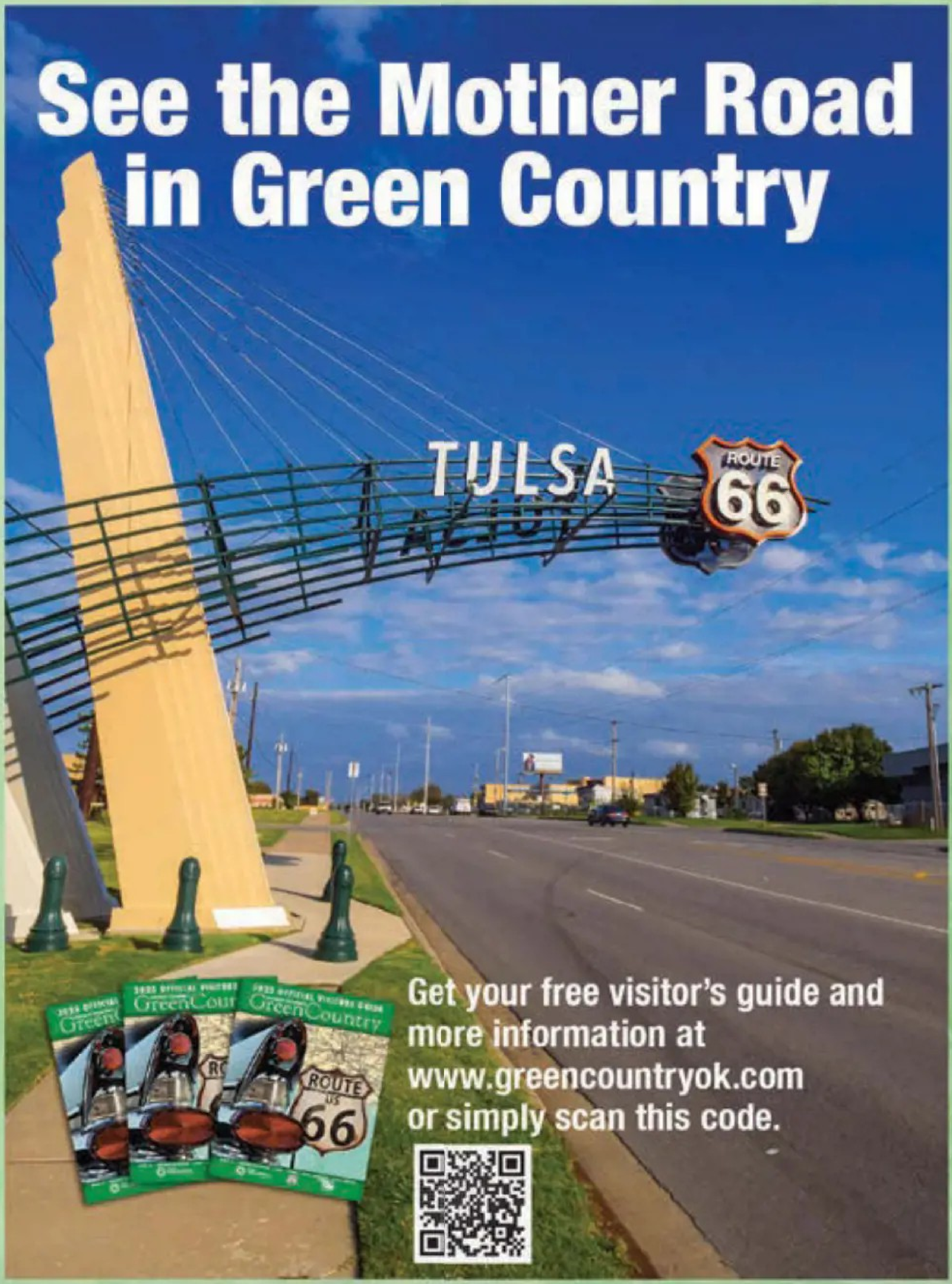

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TUNNEL VISION
NEWS AROUND THE ROAD

Contributors: Matthew Anderson, Cami Becker, Bob Curley, Adam Hlasny, Thomas Arthur Repp, and Mark Vernarelli

## Ohio Museum Makes Its Points

**LOGAN, Ohio**—What's the point of a pencil sharpener museum? Here are a few to jot down: First, the Paul A. Johnson Pencil Sharpener Museum is the only such known museum in the U.S. Second, the museum houses the life's work of not one but two pencil sharpener collectors. Third, around 14 billion pencils are still sold worldwide each year, and every one of them needs to be honed until it has a nice, sharp tip.

The Hocking Hills Regional Welcome Center in Ohio is home to the Paul A. Johnson Pencil Sharpener Museum, which includes more than 3,400 pencil sharpeners gathered over two decades by a local reverend.

"It started more than twenty years ago, with one travel souvenir, then family and friends started bringing sharpeners to him every time they would travel and gave him sharpeners for birthdays and Christmas," says Amy Weirick, a spokesperson for the Hocking Hills Tourism Association. "After news stories about the collection were published, folks started sending them to him from around the country."

The museum also includes another one thousand pencil sharpeners gathered by an unexpected second collector of sharpeners, Florida resident Frank Parades, who picked up many of his while traveling the world.

Originally housed in a small shed, the museum's core collection was donated to the Hocking Hills Tourism Association when Johnson died in 2010; similarly, Parades' wife donated her husband's pencil sharpener collection upon his passing in 2022.

"While Johnson's collection was open to the public by appointment, his home was a fairly long drive from most of the Hocking Hills State Park hiking areas and most of the region's many other attractions," Weirick says. "It is wonderful to have it more centrally located now, so that more visitors can enjoy it."

Some pencil sharpeners on display are hundreds of years old; others, such as Bulbasaur from Pokémon, are more modern. "One of the earliest models is from the early 1800s, was produced in Spain, and has many moving parts," says Weirick "The Gould & Cook sharpener from about 1886 uses sandpaper on a wheel to shape the pencil point."

Unorthodox? Sure, but so is the idea of an entire museum devoted to a mundane classroom tool, yet thousands of people rotate through the exhibits in Hocking Hills each year, so, somewhere, there is certainly a point.

## About That I-94 DETROIT Sign...

**DETROIT**—In Autumn 2024, we reported on a new gateway sign installed in the Motor City—a marquee erected on the shoulder of I-94 that spelled out the name D-E-T-R-O-I-T in letters big and bright.

A year later, the reviews are in, and locals think that sign packs too little punch.

"It's puny," one random man on the street told us, encapsulating the objections of many. "It's less Cadillac and more Pinto."

The sign builder blames an AI-generated image of it that circulated on the Internet that made it look Hollywood-size.

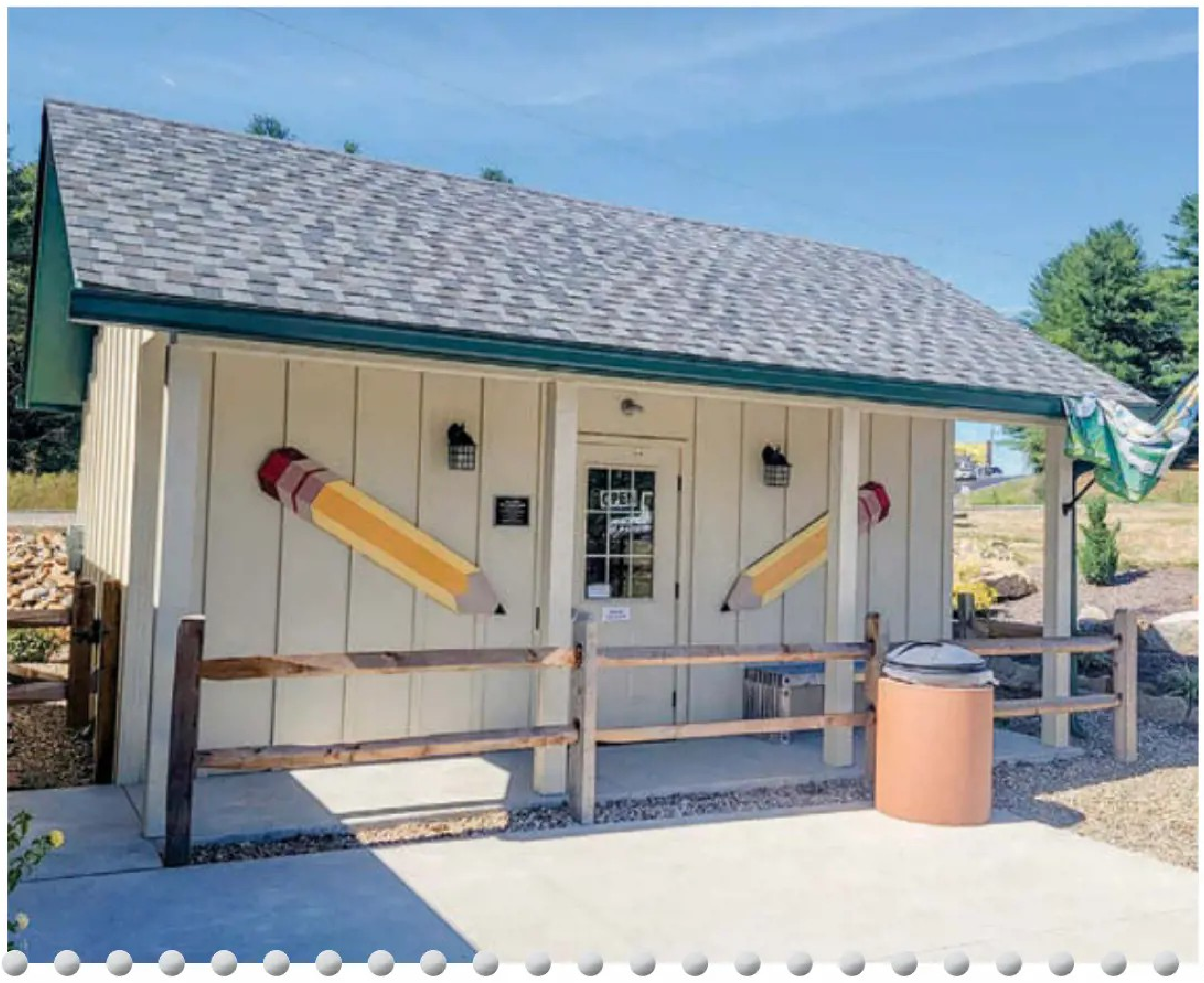
Rapper Gmac Cash doesn't care whose fault it is. He's released two songs—"Detroit Sign" and "Detroit Sign 2" that diss the illuminated landmark:

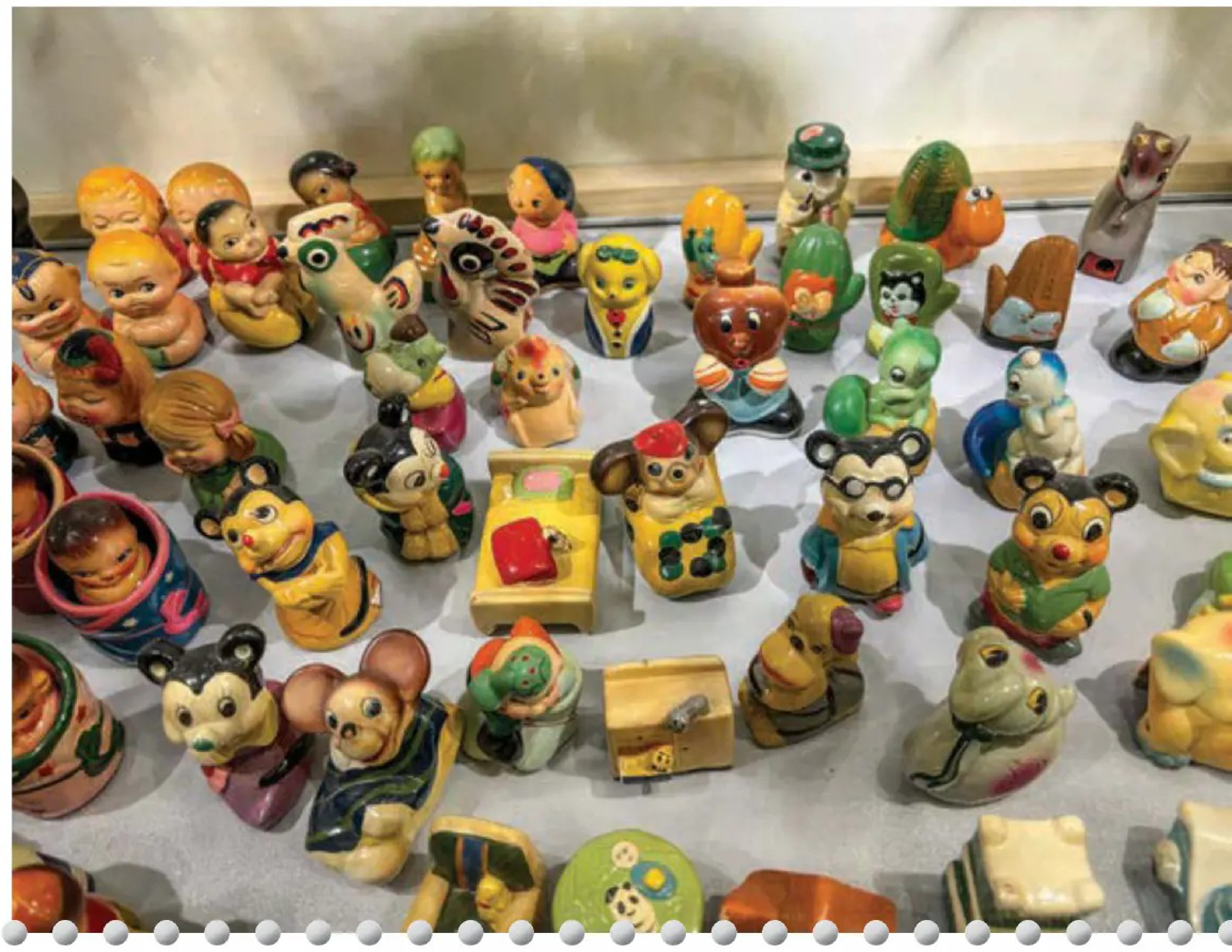
INTERSTATE
94

*Every time I see the sign I just think of Dollar Tree/They same people had to make the sign, it just gotta be....*

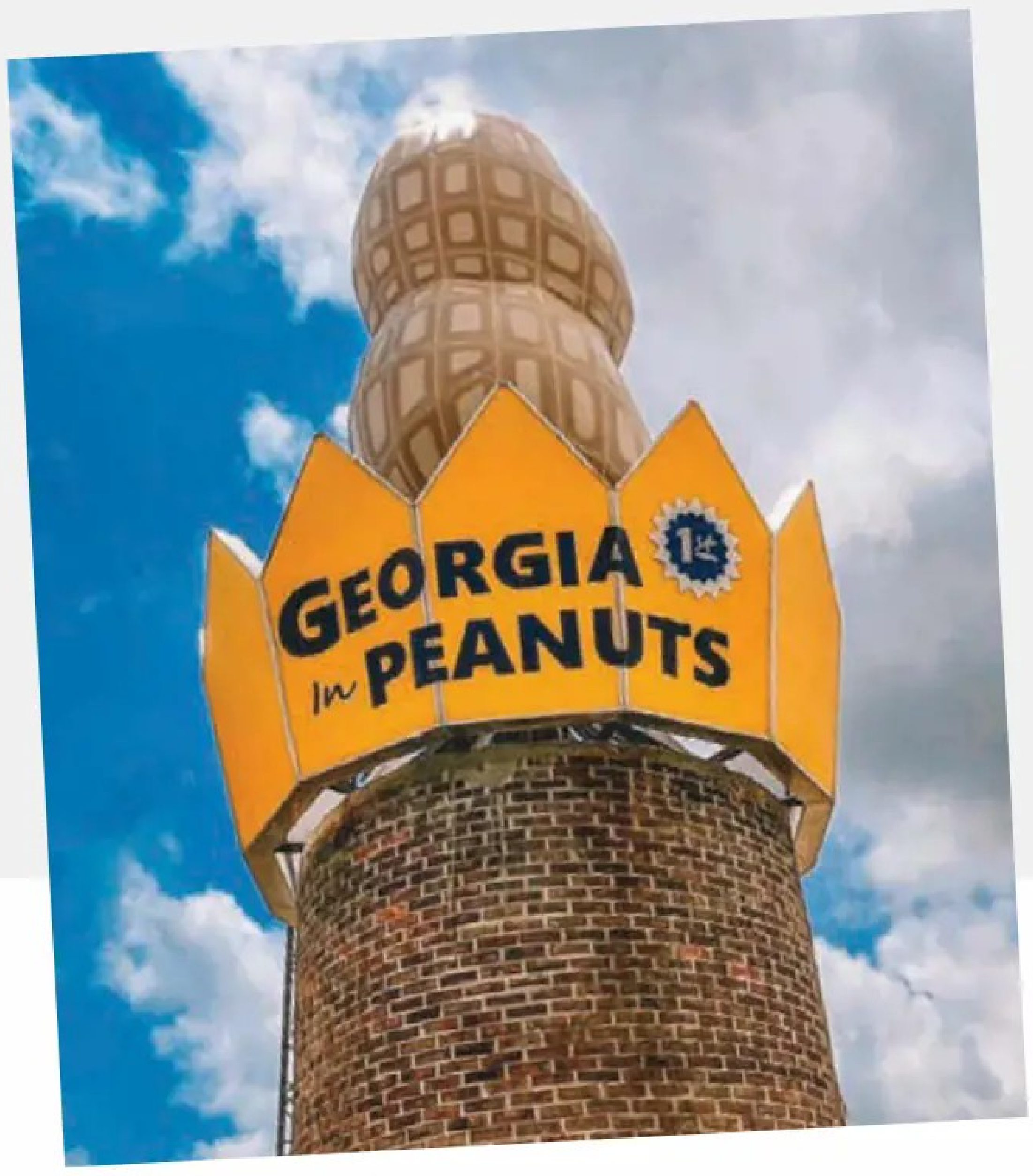
Back to the drawing board.

**LITTLE SHAVERS:** [Below] The Paul A. Johnson Pencil Sharpener Museum in Logan, Ohio, contains all manner of devices designed to put a point on a pencil.





Exterior photo courtesy the Paul A. Johnson Pencil Sharpener Museum. Collection photos © Thomas Arthur Repp.



## I-75 Peanut Is Re-Erected

**ASHBURN, Ga.**—In a nutshell, the Official Peanut Monument of Georgia was too big to fail. So when, on October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael uprooted the giant peanut from its concrete base along I-75 in Ashburn, local officials—no goobers!—quickly got to work on restoring the monument.

INTERSTATE
75

Georgia takes its peanuts seriously: This is, after all, the state that sent a peanut farmer to the White House in 1976. The twenty-foot-tall Peanut Monument in Turner County was actually raised a year before that, although it took until 1998 for it to be named the state's official peanut pillar, edging out challengers such as the toothsome Jimmy Carter Peanut in Plains.

Locally dubbed the "Big Peanut" and internationally known as the world's largest likeness of a legume, the Peanut Monument was toppled—its shell literally cracked—as the still-powerful remnants of the Category 5 hurricane moved through Georgia after battering the Florida panhandle.

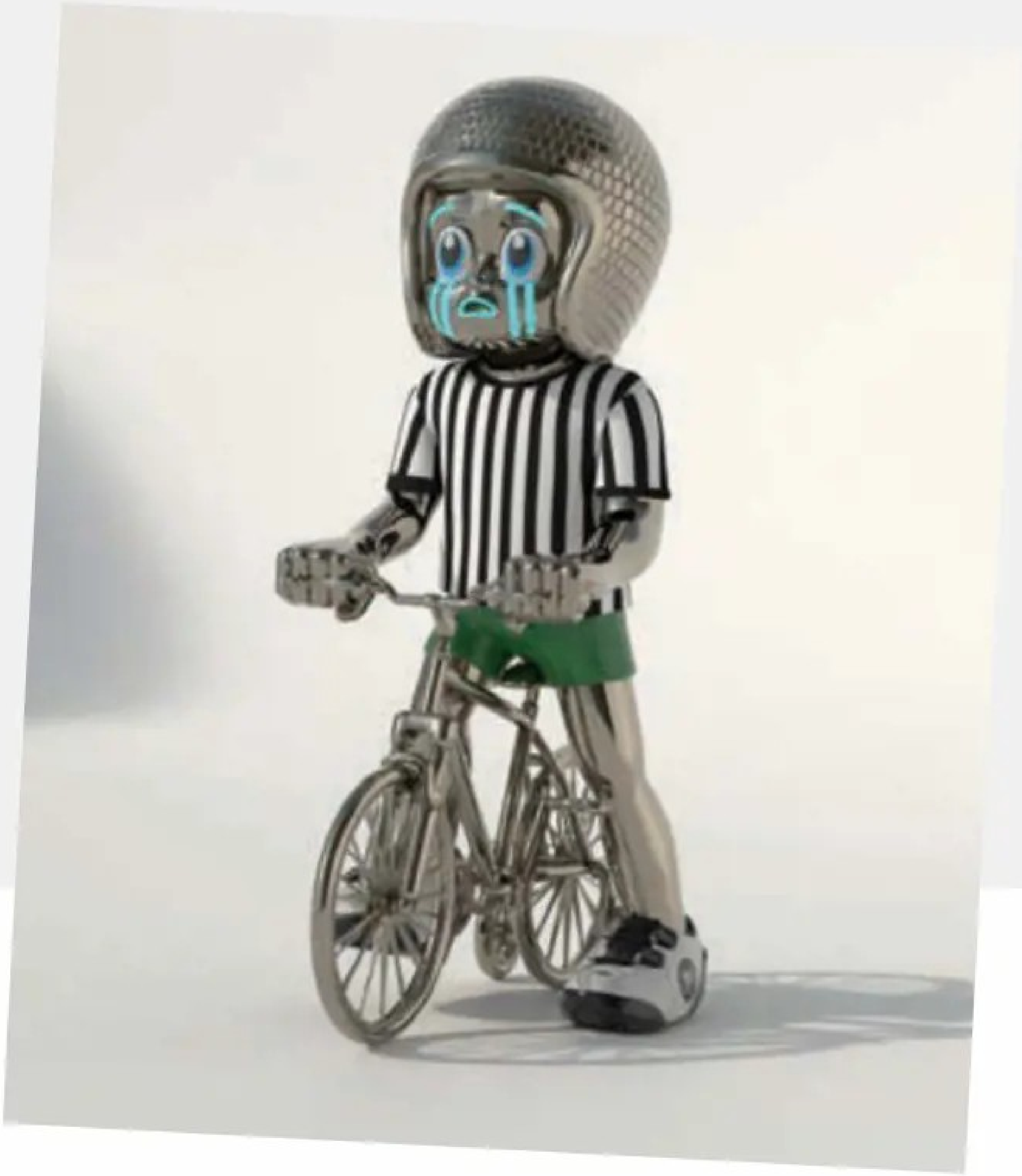
More than five years later, however, the peanut returned to its perch, it's checkered hull rising majestically from a golden crown. Funded by a campaign involving local peanut farmers and the Georgia Department of Agriculture, among others, the restoration was tasked to Cole Sercer—owner of Sercer Machine & Fabrication in nearby Rebecca, who modeled the new nut after the remains of the old one, but it's made differently, using sturdier sheet metal rather than the original fiberglass to restore the monument.

Sercer rebuilt both the peanut and the crown, the latter proudly proclaiming, "GEORGIA 1st In PEANUTS."

"Not everybody knows where Ashburn is, but they know where that peanut is," says Ashley Miller, executive director of the Ashburn Turner County Chamber of Commerce. "Seeing the peanut laying there [after the storm] was pretty bad. Everything in Turner County is touched in some way by the peanut industry."

Now that the Big Peanut is back, Miller says, "I hope that our farmers see the peanut as a monument to the long, hard hours they put in."

"This is something that everybody sees when they ride by on the interstate," adds Sercer. "It means a lot to the community."



## Big Fuss over Route 66 Crybaby

**TULSA, Okla.**—Being a crybaby is seldom a point of pride. But Tulsa, Oklahoma, is about to erect a monument to one. City officials and New England artist Ken Kelleher have settled on a final design for a twenty-foot-tall sculpture of a weeping cyclist to be installed at Cry Baby Hill.

Cry Baby Hill lies along old Route 66 a short distance from the Arkansas River. It earned a reputation for its Tulsa Tough bike races—a rowdy three-day cycling event that has been called a mini-Mardi Gras: Bystanders gather wearing outlandish costumes and party as serious cyclists pedal their way up the brutal incline during the final race. "Every weirdo within 750 miles of Tulsa is on that hill," *TulsaPeople* magazine has written.

Years ago, one spectator taunted struggling cyclists with a baby doll. That's how the hill acquired its name. When Kelleher heard about it, he proposed to create a statue to serve as a commemorative landmark and a tourist attraction. His initial renderings of the statue were described by some as resembling Kip's Big Boy crossed with a kewpie doll. There was an outcry. Route 66 historian and author Michael Wallis told KJRH-TV, "I don't want to see the capital of Route 66 get tarnished by this."

Changes were made—but too few to quell the controversy. Kelleher's final rendering depicts a helmeted and uniformed lad on a bike crying cyan tears. Some like it. Some don't. Nevertheless, it's scheduled to be installed in time for the Route 66 centennial celebrations to be held in 2026.

Meanwhile, the fuss continues.

Big Peanut courtesy Ashburn Turner County Chamber of Commerce. Cry Baby concept illustration courtesy City of Tulsa.

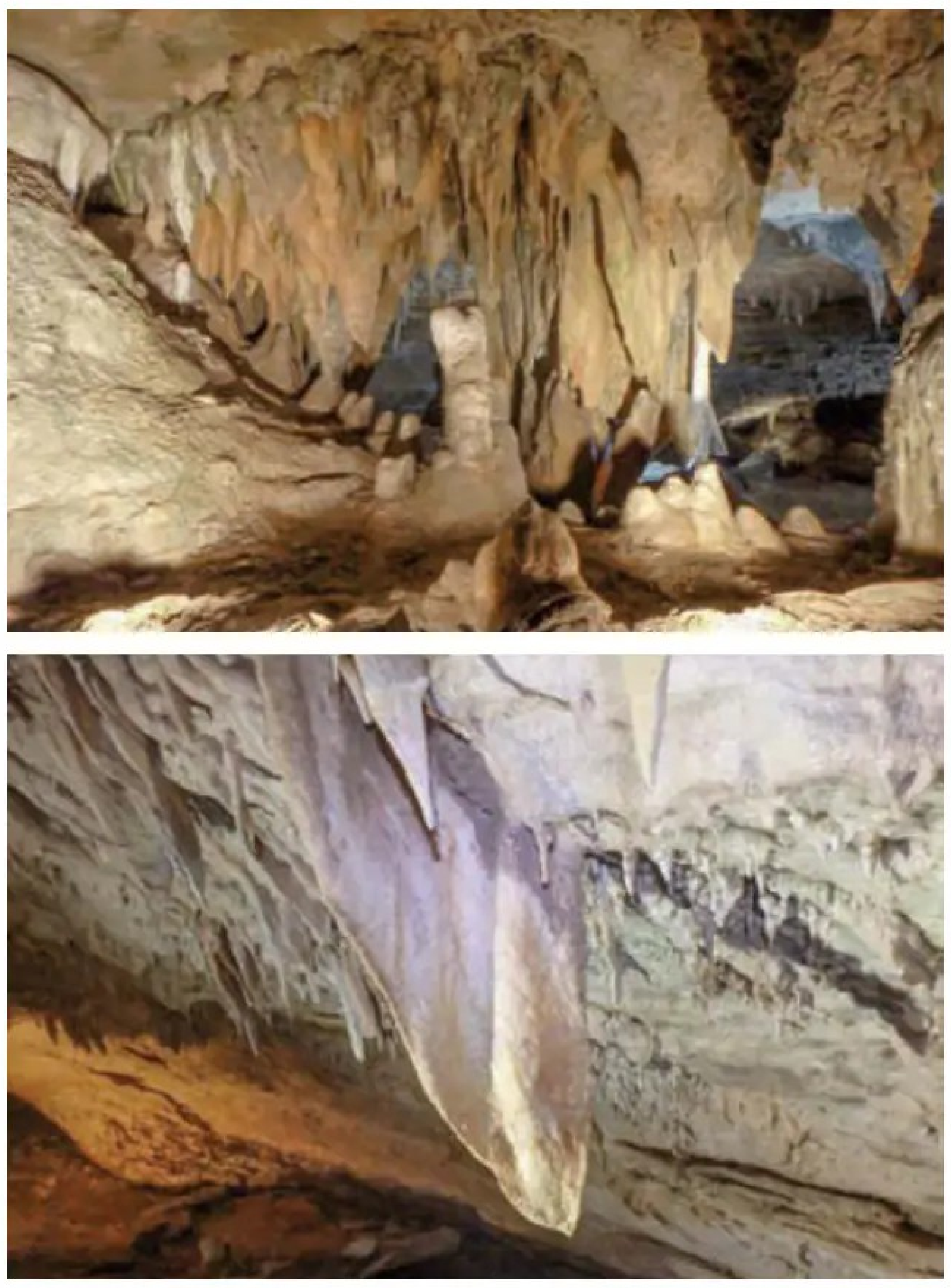
## The Cave Doctor Is Retiring

**SPRINGFIELD, Mo.**—Many visitors to show caves such as Fantastic Caverns don't know a stalactite from a stalagmite, but to "Cave Doctor" Jonathan Beard, every subterranean formation is precious and worth preserving—whether it hangs from the ceiling or grows from the floor.

And at Fantastic Caverns, Beard has found hundreds of formations desperately in need of some TLC. He spends his days underground where the damage is the deepest. Fantastic Caverns was discovered in 1862 by a man and his hunting dog—and it offers visitors the unique opportunity to tour a cavern in a Jeep-pulled wagon—but this Missouri show place was terribly misused as a speakeasy during Prohibition. Until recently, patrons had been treated to some not-so-fantastic views of natural formations broken off and carted away by drunken, Roaring-Twenties revelers and other less-than-respectful guests.

Beard was hired by Fantastic Caverns to help restore the caves as closely as possible to their original condition. Using a mix of clay, epoxy, and a lifetime of knowledge gained through his love of spelunking, he set out to fix the breaks.

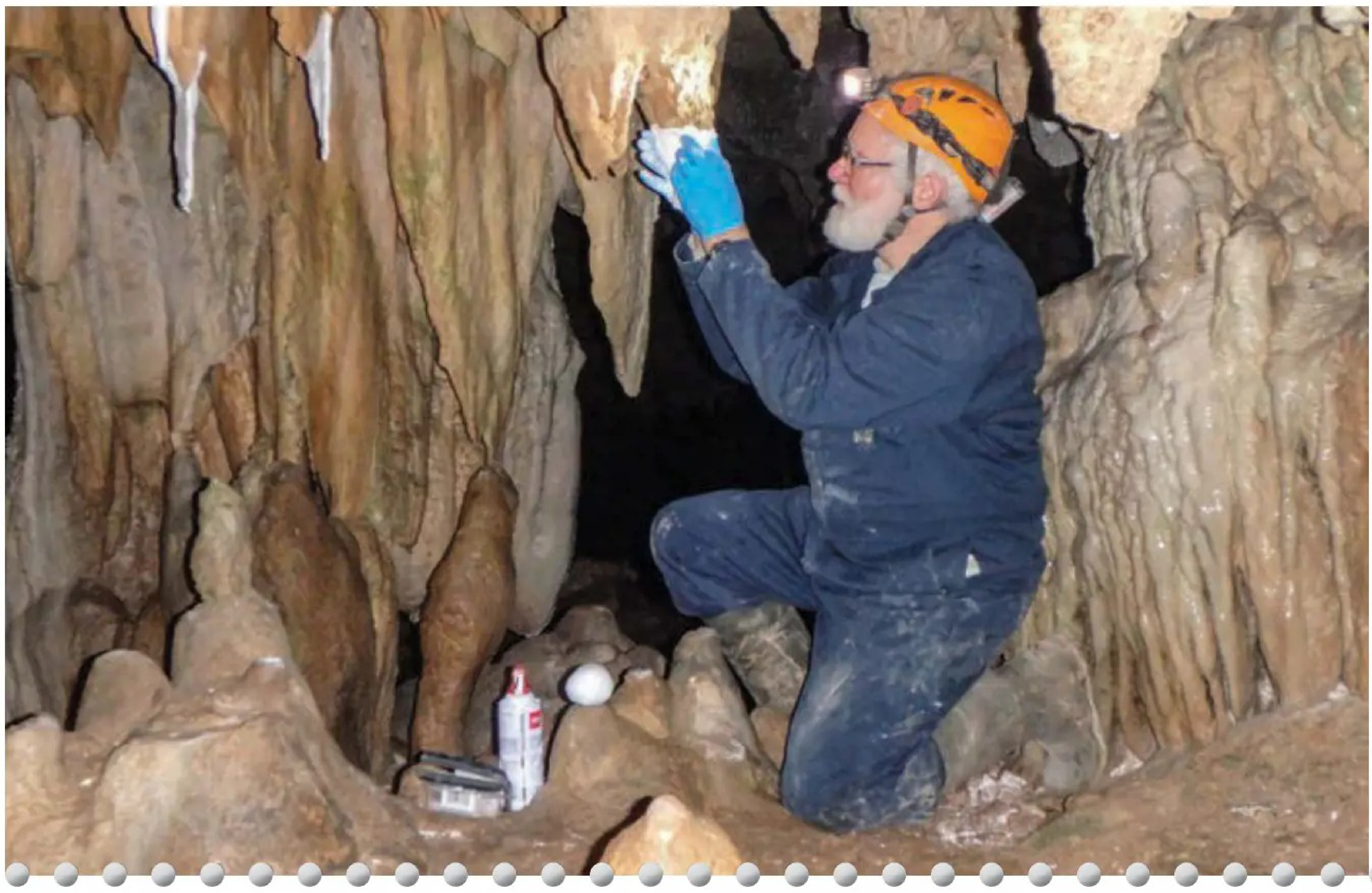
Over the course of more than a year, Beard and his apprentice, Sarah Peterson, repaired exactly 1,722 stalactites—the tapered limestone formations that hang from cave ceilings—and stalagmites—the corresponding formations that rise from the cave floor.



"It's very satisfying work," says Beard. He points out that, over time, dripping water saturated with calcium carbonate will cover the repairs he has made with new natural deposits, rendering his prosthetics indistinguishable from the original speleothems—although it may take a thousand years for that to happen.

Beard won't be around to see that, of course. He says Fantastic Caverns may be one of the last projects he undertakes before retiring. "I'm like an artist who has completed a sculpture," he says. "At age 73, I'm ready to move on." He says he'd like to spend more time above ground than below it, in places warm and dry.

**SUBTERRANEAN SURGERY:** [Below] Cave Doctor Jonathan Beard repairs a stalactite. [Above] This repaired drapery was "trained" so that it would drip onto a repaired stalagmite below it—as it once did perhaps a century ago.



## Brown's Motel Bulldozed

**Ellicott City, Md.**—A Mid-Atlantic motel that once housed wartime troops and was locally famous for its themed "Rooms of the World" has gone to hospitality heaven.

Demolition crews have razed historic Brown's Motel in Ellicott City, Maryland. In early December 2024, the thirty-unit, horseshoe-shaped motel was abruptly closed to make way for a planned eighty-nine-unit apartment complex designed to house people aged 55-plus.

Located on US Highway 40, adjacent to Patapsco State Park, Brown's Motel was built in the 1940s. During its heyday, it served motorists driving the Baltimore National Pike who wanted to be somewhere else. "We offer Rooms of the World," read one of Brown's period advertisements, "which offer the ambiance and décor of far away lands: Paris, China, Tropical Tahiti, Africa, India, Las Vegas, Hollywood, and Cape Cod."

The motel reportedly served as makeshift barracks that briefly housed troops during World War II.

Like many other motels from the halcyon days of American road trips, Brown's eventually remade itself into a home for short- and long-term residents. Now its demolition has made way for a newer establishment that will serve a similar purpose in the motel's old idyllic setting.

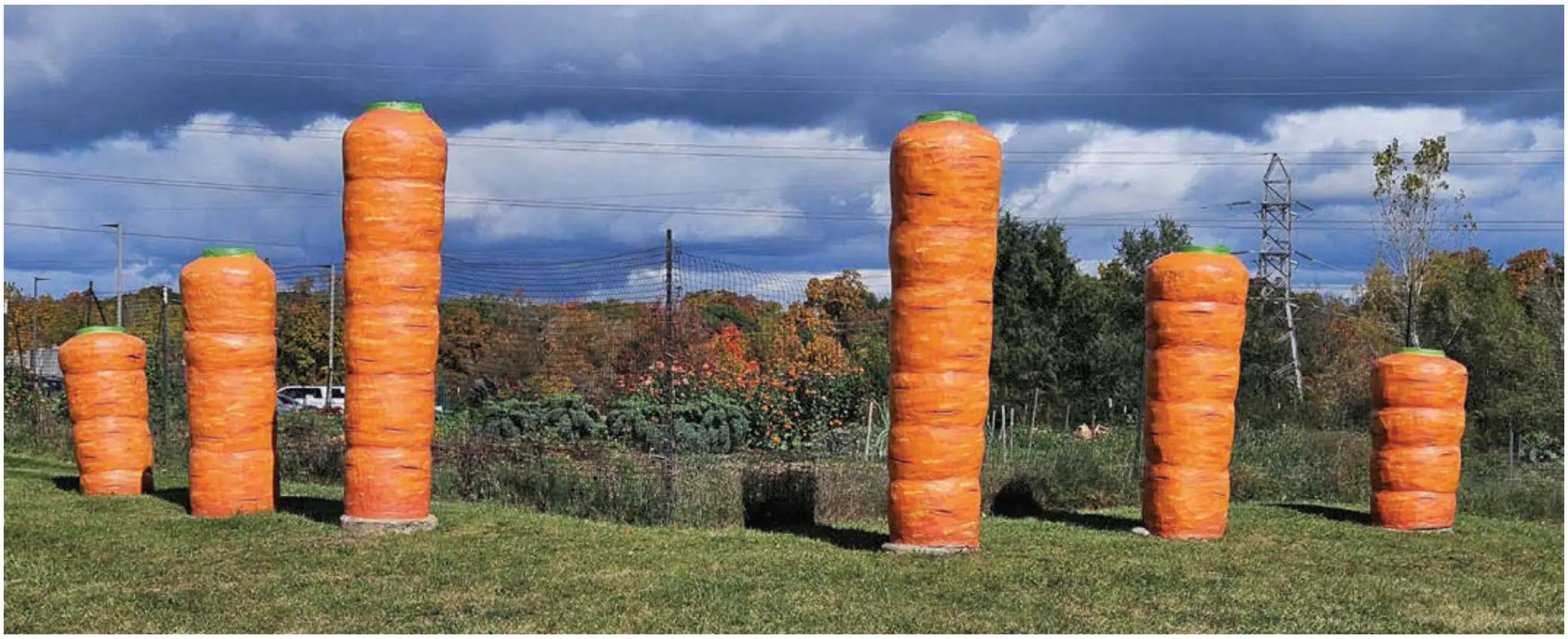
## I-95 Takes a Milk Bath

**PALM BEACH, Fla.**—Got milk? Odds are you would have if you'd been driving a certain stretch of Interstate 95 in the off hours last January 29. Indeed, you would be swimming in the stuff.

Just after midnight on that date, a Borden Dairy truck crashed into a median near Palm Beach. As a result, 4,160 gallons of milk packaged in plastic jugs spilled onto the highway, turning the pavement into a spattered dairyland. Eleven people were evaluated on the scene, but no one was hurt.

"Thankfully they were uninjured and none of them needed to be "moo-ved" to the hospital," firefighters reported in a social media post.

Photos courtesy Jonathan and Alicia Beard.



# Carrots Repaired in Ann Arbor

**ANN ARBOR, Mich.**—Remember, when you were a kid, how your folks would tell you to eat your vegetables? Some parents in Ann Arbor, Michigan, must take special glee from saying that. “Eat your carrots,” they chide their offspring, “and then you can have ice cream.” Then they drive their tykes past the giant taproots famously found off Dhu Varren Road and really freak them out.

The six concrete carrots popping out of the ground there range from four to ten feet in height. Their actual address is 1 Carrot Way, and they belong to Food Gatherers of Washtenaw County—a food bank and food rescue program founded in 1988. “Planted” in their current location since 2013, they were created by a man who made a living designing miniature golf courses—and he must have eaten his veggies as a tot because these carrots are an artistic hole in one: They are big enough to remind drivers passing by to appreciate the food they have and cheerful enough to remind them we should always help the less fortunate.

Locals love the orange sculptures, and tourists do, too. And so it was that not long ago, the higher-ups at Food Gatherers began making plans to see their tall orange symbols given some much needed upkeep attention. Ten years of harsh Michigan winters had bled away their color and begun to nibble away at their cement. And that’s when the company learned how widespread appreciation for its sculptures actually was.

The company received an email inquiry—out of the blue—from Calista Dillon of Sinclair College in Dayton, Ohio. Not only was she interested in restoring the carrots for a senior project, but she was skilled in working with cement and had even received an award for a ceramic fruit sculpture in a juried art show. The arrangement was so serendipitous that Food Gatherers’ CEO Eileen Spring says, “I thought I was being pranked by a coworker.”

Dillon, a fan of quirky roadside attractions, had heard about the carrots online. She’d made the three-hour drive to Ann Arbor and seen the ailing state they were in. “I was thinking they needed to be saved before winter,” she told the *Detroit Free Press*. “My brain automatically looks at something broken and ceramic and says ‘I can fix that.’”

Food Gatherers gave Dillon the greenlight to fix their prized sculptures, and she set to work. In the course of one weekend, she had the concrete carrots scrubbed, repaired, repainted in a vibrant shade of orange with light and dark accents, and weather-proofed. On the freshly refurbished skin of one of the carrots, she added the inscription LOVE THE CARROTS, LOVE THE CAUSE as a philosophical signature.

“This was a dream come true for me,” Dillon told reporters. “I didn’t want to leave them. It’s almost like they’re my babies now.”

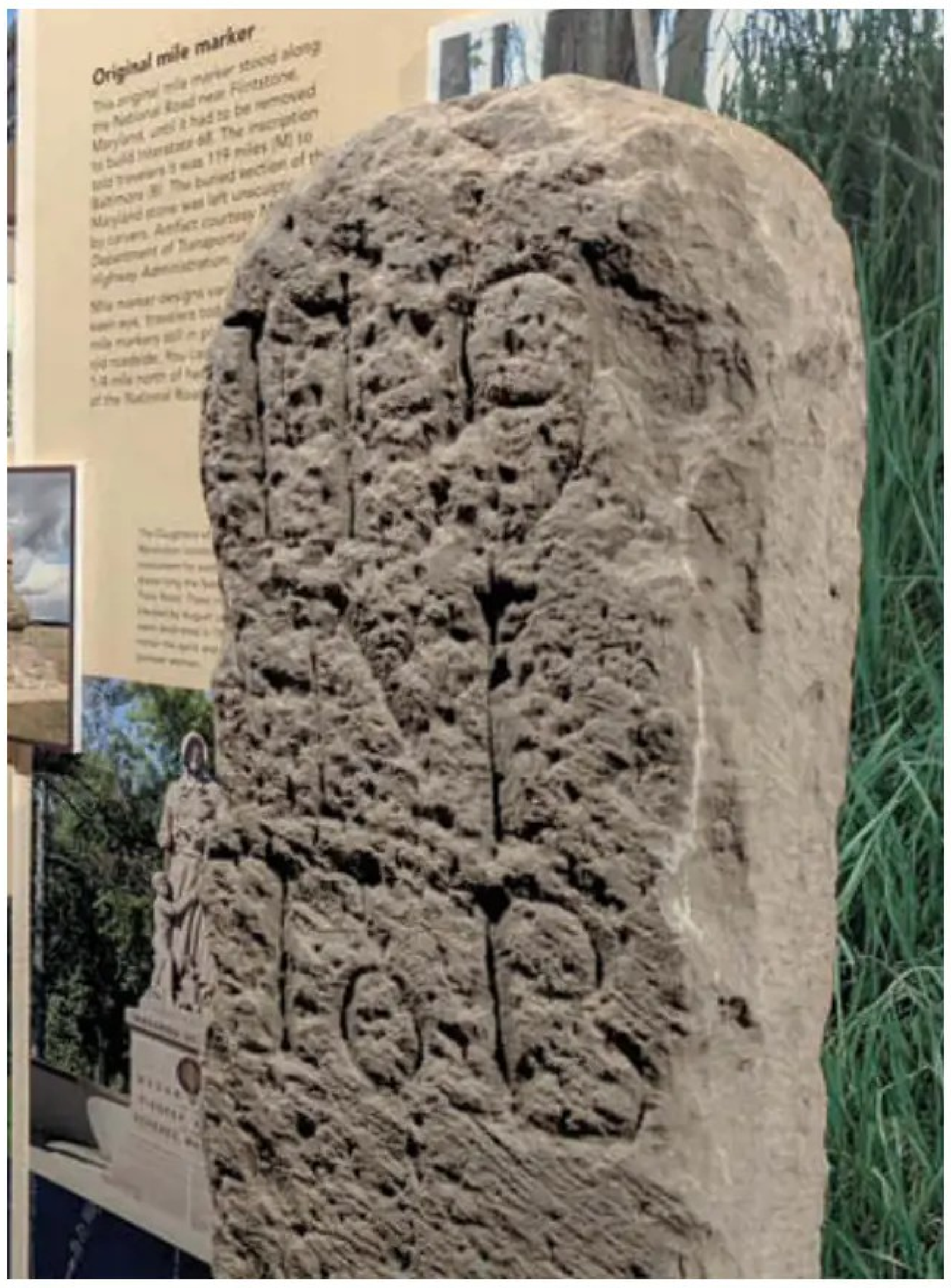
To Food Gatherers, these giant vegetables transcend gimmickry. According to Spring, “Carrots are more than just our logo. They are a versatile, tasty vegetable, nutritious and practical, and they have deep roots. They represent who we are as an organization.”

Now, eat your vegetables.

**WHAT’S UP, DOC?** [Above] The colossal carrots at Food Gatherers of Ann Arbor look more orange than ever. They were recently restored and fortified by Calista Dillon [below], a senior art student from Sinclair College in Dayton, Ohio.

Photos courtesy Calista Dillon and Food Gatherers.

## National Road Museum Opens



**BOONSBORO, Md.**—Visitors to the Boonsboro area find many interesting and historical sites to explore. There's a trolley museum, a mountaintop tower dedicated to George Washington, an inn owned by famous author Nora Roberts, and the beautifully preserved Antietam National Battlefield. Now, travelers will also discover a new museum dedicated to the nation's first federally funded highway.

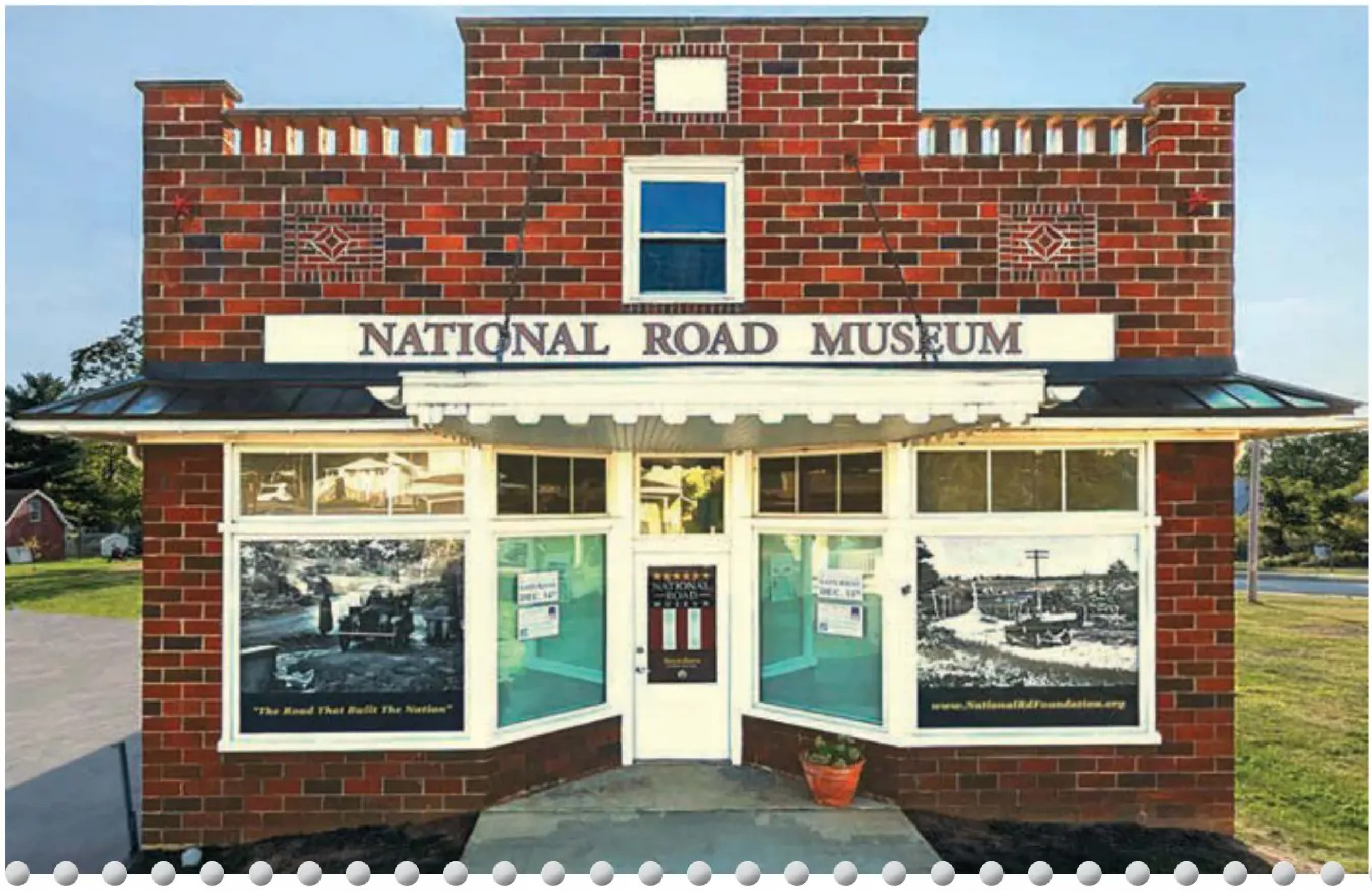
"The National Road Museum is Maryland's only museum dedicated specifically to the history and importance of this significant roadway," says Reuben L. Moss, executive director of the new museum and the Boonsboro Trolley Station Museum next door. "The highway's eastern extension in our area was one of the oldest westward wagon roads in the region. It was also the first road to use the macadam stone paving process."

The new museum is located near the halfway point between Baltimore and Cumberland—the latter being the city in which the National Road began its westward push over the Appalachian Mountains. Six miles west of Cumberland, the turnpike's seven-sided 1835-era LaVale Toll Gate House still stands.

The new museum honors that tollhouse—and additional National Road landmarks such as the 1850 wrought iron Wheeling Suspension Bridge—that became foundations of American identity. Displays recount how early drivers traveled the road with horse teams that were fitted with harness bells, and, later, in early Fords that struggled to climb uphill. Of particular interest is an original National Road stone mile marker. The limestone obelisk—pockmarked by decades of wind and rain—stood along the National Road near Flintstone, Maryland, until its removal was made necessary by the construction of modern Interstate 68. The inscription on its weathered face reads "119 M ToB"—which early travelers knew meant "119 miles to Baltimore."

It's all a reverential tribute to one of America's most significant roads.

**GO NATIONAL:** [Above] An original stone mile marker that once stood along the path in western Maryland is displayed at the new National Road Museum in Boonsboro [below]. The museum is located at 214 North Main Street.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## Tarantula Sex on US 50

**LA JUNTA, Colo.**—Old-road fans know that US Highway 50 is commonly called "The Loneliest Road." But every autumn, it is *the* place to go to get some—that is, if you're hairy and have eight legs.

Every fall, tourists descend upon the small town of La Junta, Colorado, during the height of tarantula mating season. That's when the male spiders—around eight years old and finally in their sexual maturity—begin to roam as far as twenty miles along the road in search of mates.

About the size of a human hand, these randy arachnids emerge by the thousands, which means the odds of spotting one (or dozens) of the crawly fellows is pretty high. The Colorado Brown Tarantula is plentiful throughout the Comanche National Grassland, where females burrow into the earth and send out pheromones, awaiting male suitors.

Any spider you see pattering down the street this time of year is likely a male looking for love—and if it's moving particularly fast, it's a good bet that the act has just been completed, as the males hightail it away to avoid being eaten. If they're spry enough, they can go on breeding with as many as one hundred females before mating season is over. So say the researchers who keep count of such things.

Spider mania doesn't exist only in La Junta, of course; tarantulas are native to an eight-state region that spreads southeast to Louisiana and down into Mexico. However, this cute Colorado town of seven thousand has gone all in on the fall spectacle, putting together a two-day annual Tarantula Fest to capitalize on the natural phenomenon. Events at this crawly celebration include eight-legged races, a hairy leg contest, tarantula talks, a parade, bus tours of mating areas, and even a free screening of the 1990 horror-comedy *Arachnophobia* at the 112-year-old Fox Theatre downtown.

The 2025 Tarantula Fest is scheduled to take place on September 26–27. Book now to make sure you're there for the upcoming mass spider meet-up. And do drive carefully as you head into town; the eight-legged fellows really will be out there on US 50, making it lonely no more.

Photos courtesy National Road Museum.

## Return of Wonder Gardens

**BONITA SPRINGS, Fla.**—The real wonder is that Wonder Gardens is still here, but it will take more than a hurricane and generational changes in travel habits (cough, cough, Disney) to shutter this classic roadside attraction.

Opened on the Tamiami Trail in 1936 as the Reptile Gardens, this was one of the first of old Florida's alligator attractions. Operated by the same family for eighty-five years, the name changed to Wonder Gardens when more tropical foliage was added, but little else did other than the road signs, which now read "US 41."

By 2013, it seemed like the end of the awe was at hand when Wonder Gardens closed, but a group of conservation-minded locals resurrected the three-acre park, which eventually was purchased by the city of Bonita Springs and now operates as a public-private partnership.

Wonder Gardens has weathered many challenges in its long history, but perhaps none as big as 2022's Hurricane Ian, which ripped apart the flora and fauna and flooded the park with over three feet of storm surge.

"The property was filled with ten feet of debris that took 180 volunteers weeks just to make passable," says Neil Anderson, president and CEO of Wonder Gardens.

"Ian was devastating to Wonder Gardens, but it made us take a hard look at our strategic plan," says Anderson. "We knew that we could be old and historic, but we couldn't be old and run down."

Reopened in October of 2024, Wonder Gardens is arguably better than ever. Not only have the facilities been upgraded and hurricane-proofed, large trees lost in the storm have been replaced, the alligator exhibit now includes an underwater viewing area, and there are new habitats for flamingoes as well as the river otters native to the Imperial River, which runs alongside the property. Future plans include an aerial walkway to "tell the story of life in the canopy, up in the Banyan trees," says Anderson.

"We lost so much of old Florida in Hurricane Ian; it's important that we keep the attractions that are left," says Anderson. "When they're gone, all we'll have is memories. We want to continue to see parents and grandparents taking their kids to enjoy Wonder Gardens. It's a legacy experience."

## Piedmont Gateway Gets Going

**RIDGEWAY, S.C.**—Slow-lane motorists took a victory lap last November when South Carolina opened its first new scenic byway in many years. The Piedmont Gateway Scenic Byway connects historic Ridgeway to White Oak, via sections of US Highway 21, Camp Welfare Road, and the old Mobley Highway. Its twenty-six miles bring drivers the opportunity to enjoy nature away from the beaches and mountains. Points of interest include the 1853 Century House/Ridgeway Town Hall, the World's Smallest Police Station, and the 7,500-gallon Ridgeway Watertown—one of the last "Tin Man"-style water towers still in use in the Palmetto State.

**PARADISE REGAINED:** [Above] Wonder Gardens is back in a big way on old US 41 in Bonita Springs. [Below] Wild residents found on the grounds include Indian peafowl, American alligators, and gold pheasants from the forests of western China.

Wonder Gardens pond © Debra Tosca. Additional images courtesy Wonder Gardens.

## 1924 Time Capsule Opened

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.**—The longer it lay there, the more explosive it became.

For one hundred years, a metal box sat buried in concrete and limestone beneath the 217-foot-tall Liberty Memorial Tower at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City.

To unearth and remove the box in October 2024, museum officials had to call in the Kansas City Police Department bomb squad.

Why?

Among the items officials knew were buried in the 1924 capsule was a roll of volatile nitrate film that paid homage to the thriving era of silent cinema. Thankfully, officials were able to retrieve the newsreel—and the other contents of the box—without any damage.

Other items in the time capsule were a vial of seeds, a Bible, a copy of the US Constitution, and a copy of the American declaration of war from April 1917. Letters from President Calvin Coolidge and five Allied generals also were included.

Plans are underway to bury a new time capsule in 2026. Sports-related gear (this is Kansas City Chiefs football territory, after all) likely will make the cut, says museum curator Christopher Warren. What else will be buried is anybody's guess.

INTERSTATE
35

Warren says he and museum staff have been pondering including an object that somehow recognizes today's fraught political climate while encouraging folks to unite as a community.

"One hundred years from now, people are going to say, 'Oh, wow, these people couldn't get along,'" Warren says. "Hopefully, by then, we'll be getting along better."

More than a century on, we are still living in the world created by World War I, Warren explains. A major theme taught to museum visitors is that actions have consequences, for better or worse.

"History is a million different decisions made by people that all contributed to one path," Warren says. "The decisions we make today as a society can affect the world in so many ways. The time capsule can encourage people to be more thoughtful."

The public can submit ideas for time capsule items online via the museum's website at theworldwar.org.

Nothing explosive, please.

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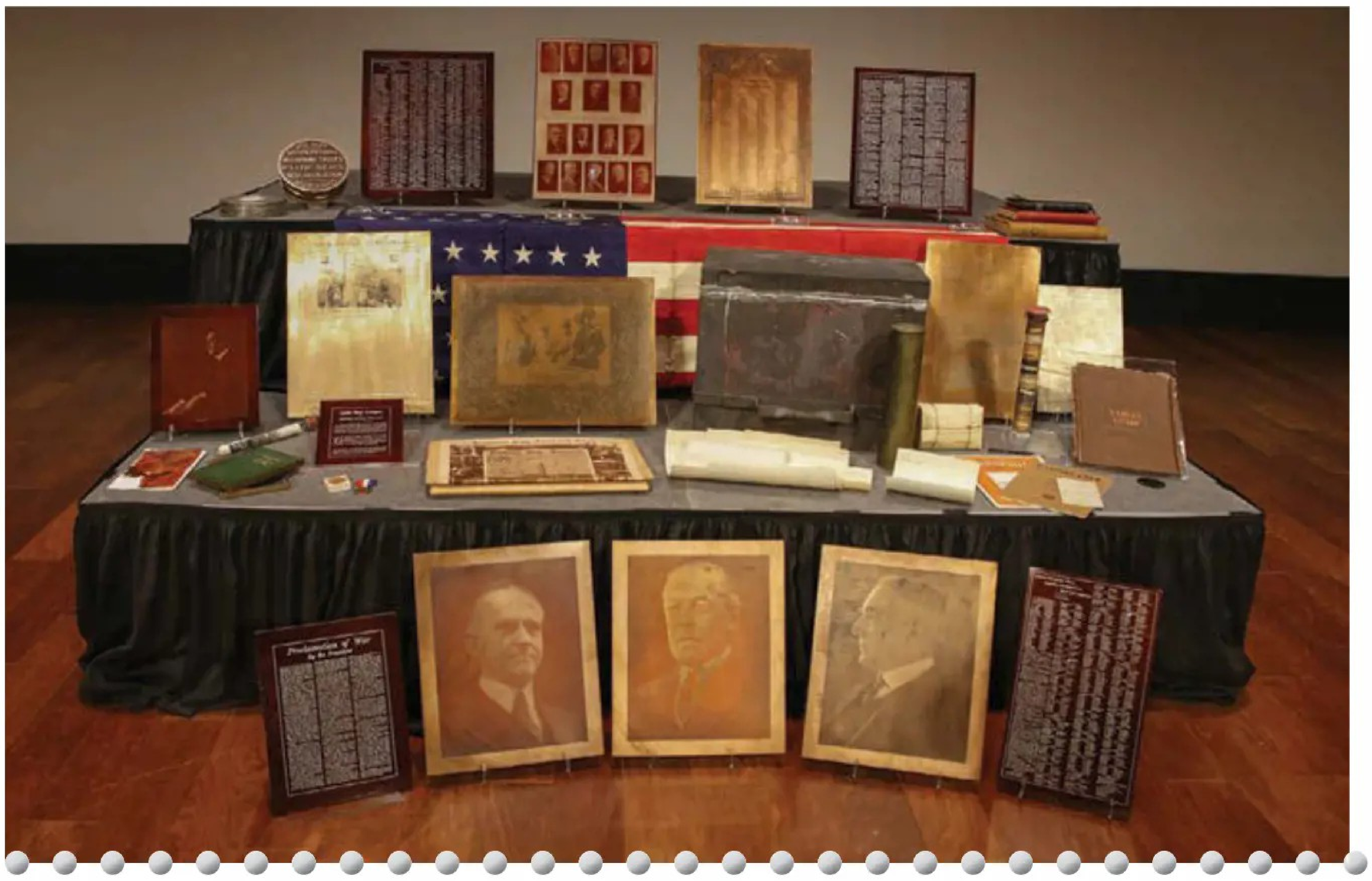
## Byways Center Announced

**ALTON, Ill.**—Sightseers in Greater St. Louis will benefit from the opening of a new Byway Discovery Center in Spring 2026. The 4,500-square-foot facility will be located west of Alton, Illinois, on the thirty-three-mile Meeting of the Great Rivers Scenic Byway. Open seven days a week, it will offer exhibits showcasing the "Seven Wonders of Illinois," the forested river bluffs, and the area's history.

**LIBERTY FOR ALL:** [Below] The Liberty Memorial time capsule was buried in 1924 and opened in 2024 to celebrate the end of World War I. The capsule contained items such as letters from President Calvin Coolidge and a 400-foot Pathé newsreel showing American troops returning from abroad.



GREAT RIVER ROAD
CANADA TO GULF

Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau President & CEO Cory Jobe says the center "will be a full immersion experience." Highlights include "outdoor learning areas, interpretive panels, an outdoor art installation, a riverside trail, and a kayak landing area." Indoors will feature a permanent exhibit space, gift shop, and lecture facilities. More than just a place to stretch stiff limbs, the center will make a mission of telling the mighty rivers' stories, and introducing travelers to the region's unique place in frontier history.

But there's more. The nearby 180-foot Lewis & Clark Confluence Tower site is also slated for major renovations and expansion, public art installations, a new children's play area, and exhibits celebrating the Corps of Discovery. Whether boldly blazing new trails or languidly lollygagging, these impressive enhancements will surely inspire visitors to follow the flow of the Great Rivers.

"We are very excited," Jobe concludes.

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## Roanoke Star Turns 75

**ROANOKE, Va.**—Last November, The Star City of the South celebrated a milestone for the shining icon that gave it that romantic nickname.

Roanoke, Virginia, threw a party for the seventy-fifth anniversary of its gigantic steel star that twinkles atop Mill Mountain just south of downtown.

The eighty-eight-foot five-pointer contains two thousand feet of neon tubing. It is the largest freestanding, man-made, illuminated star in the world. First lit at precisely 8:22 P.M. on November 23, 1949—when Mayor A. R. Minton threw a ceremonial switch before a Thanksgiving Eve crowd of 250 goggle-eyed invitees—it was built as a seasonal spectacle but soon became a permanent attraction and a symbol of community pride.

The star towers nearly nine-hundred feet over the Roanoke valley. The overlook at its base provides spectacular views of the city's historic downtown market and the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains. The star is lit nightly because Roanoke residents would never have it any other way.

"[The Roanoke star] tells about a time when Roanokans thought big and dreamed big," says local historian Nelson Harris.

Time capsule photo courtesy World War I Museum and Memorial. Roanoke Star © Jeffrey Isaac Greenberg.

THE ROANOKE STAR

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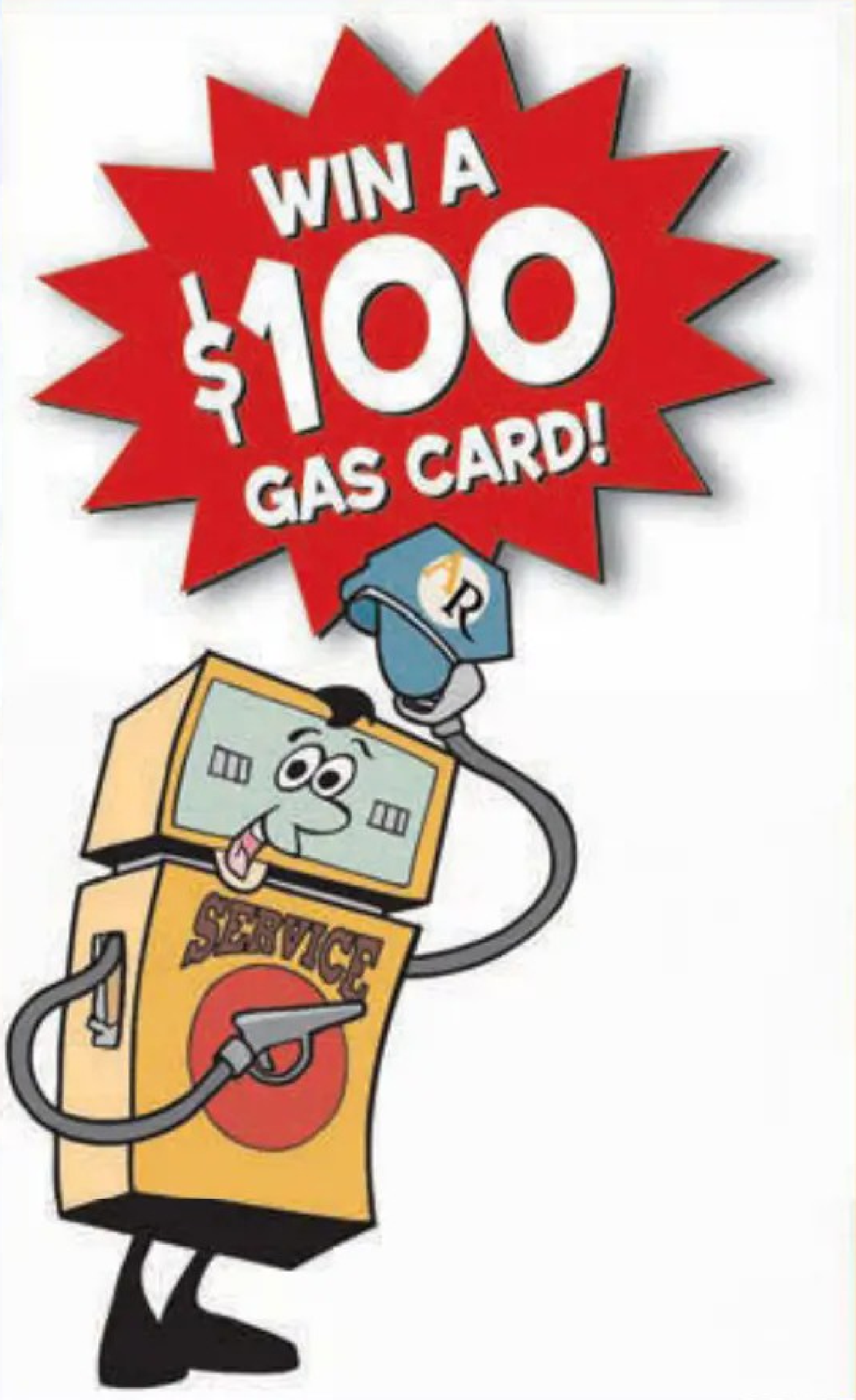

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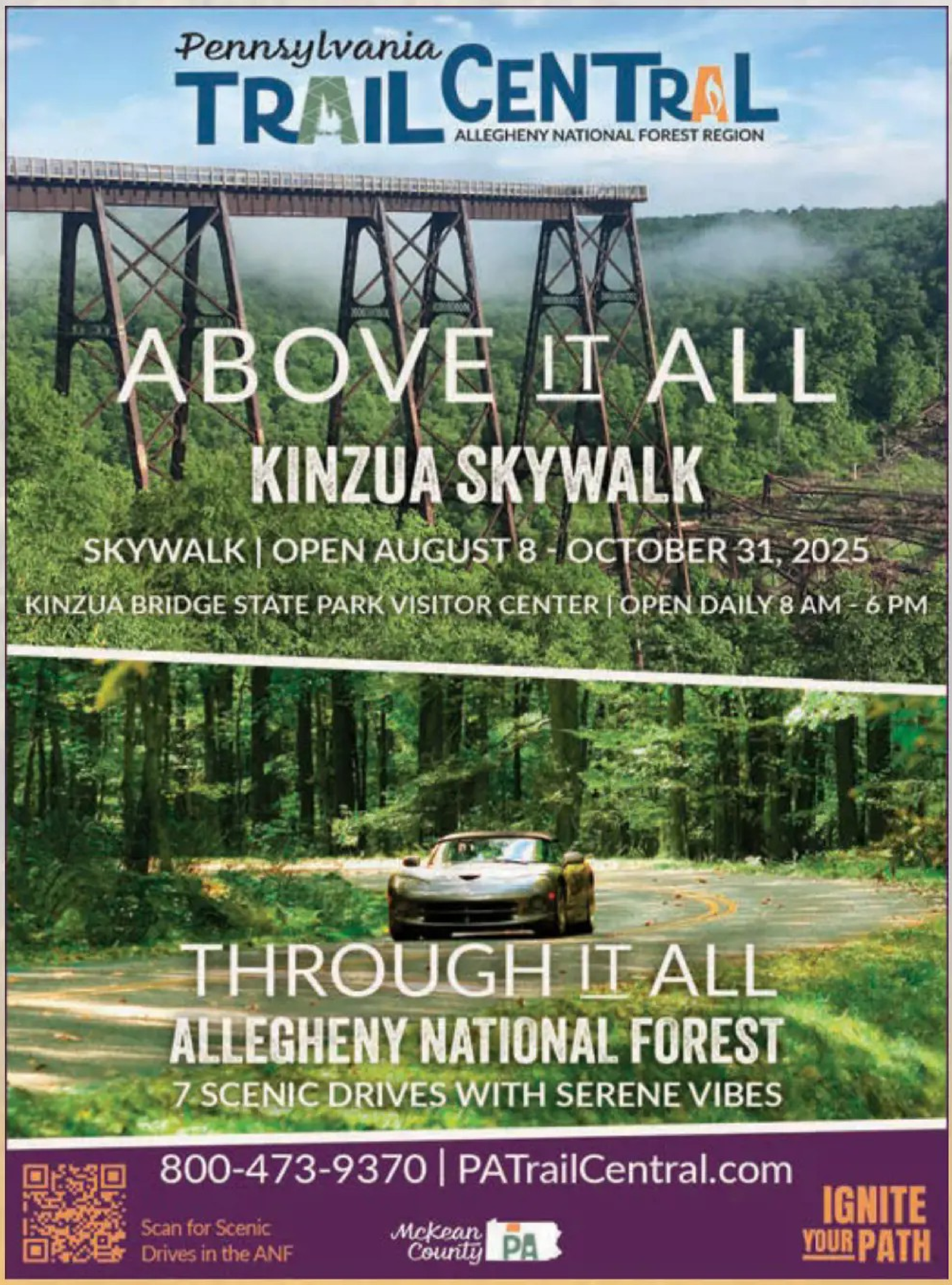

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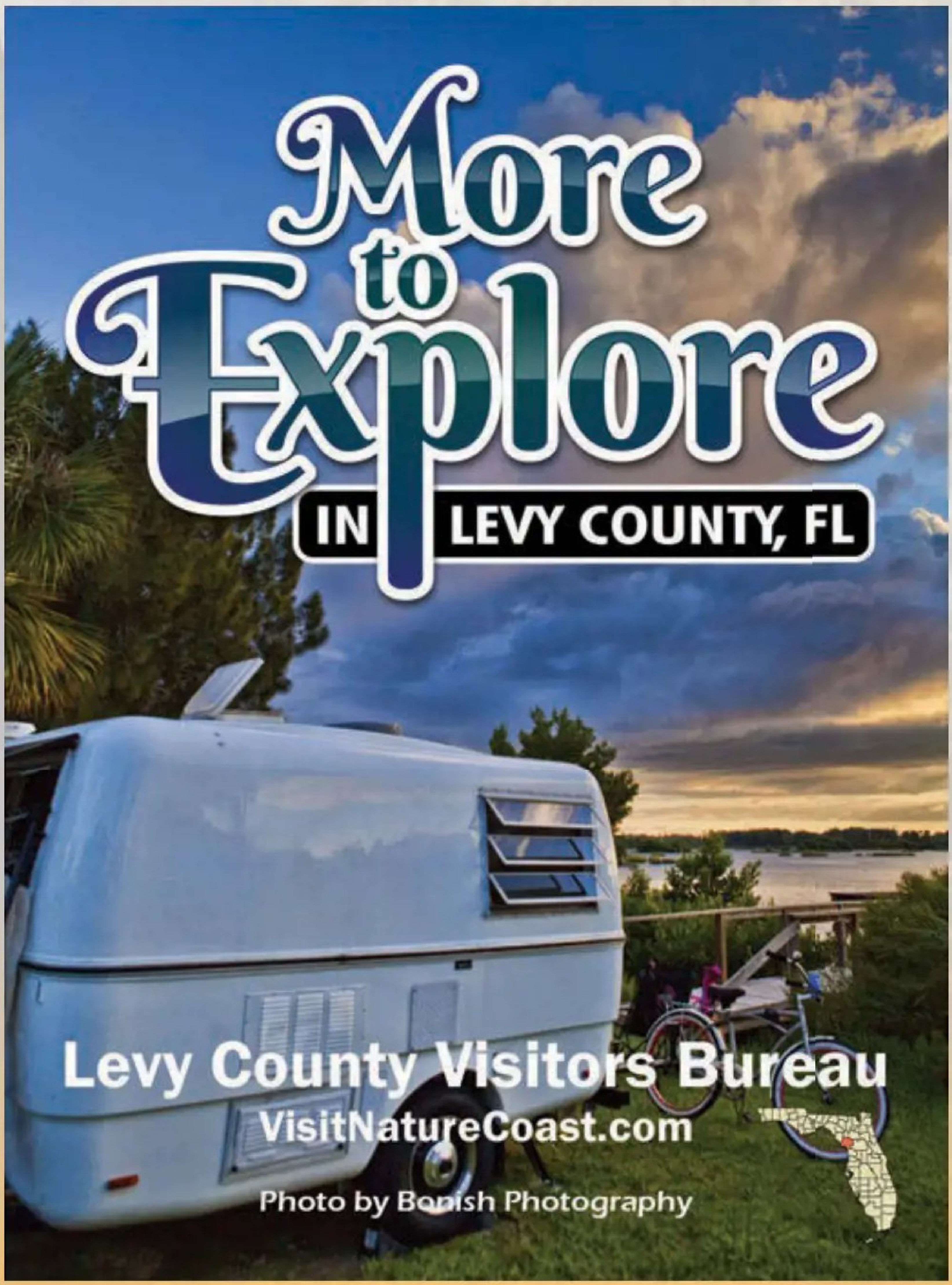

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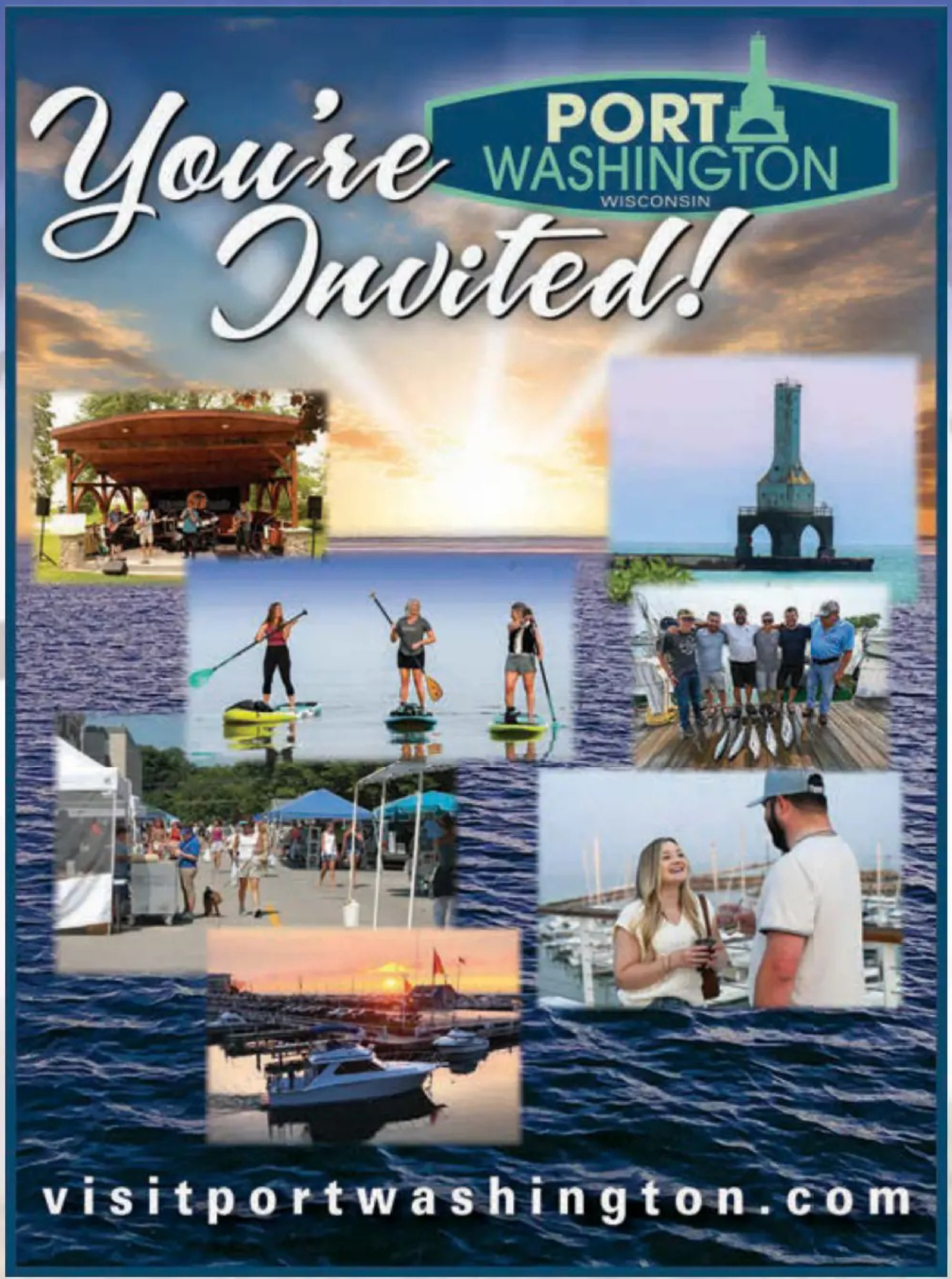
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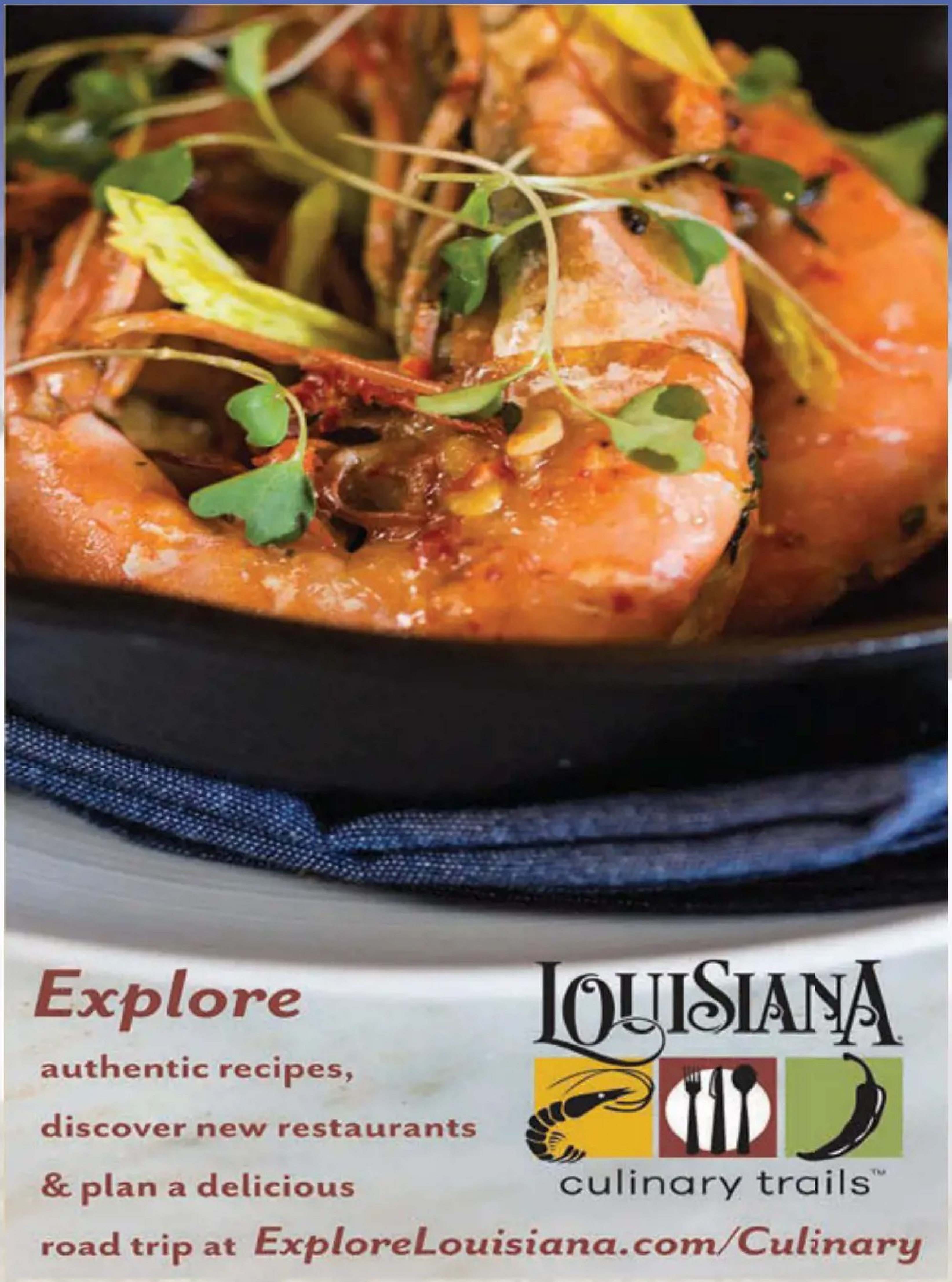

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# JUMPING THE SHARK

## THE STORY OF PARADISE COVE

WELCOME TO
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SEA THE VIEW
BRING THE KIDS
HAVE A SEAT
ENJOY MALIBU

**If you think of Malibu (without the flames and smoke of the Palisades Fire that ravaged it in January 2025, of course) the image that most likely comes to mind—of sun-splashed blue water, pristine white sands, funky seaside cafés with surfboard signage, and tanned millionaires eating calamari—is one of Paradise Cove.**

Never heard of Paradise Cove? Well, you've surely seen it on screens big and small. From James Garner's beachside trailer in the 1970s television crime drama *The Rockford Files* to the cover of the Beach Boys' 1962 album *Surfin' Safari* to the 2006 Marvel movie *X-Men: The Last Stand*, and full circle to Mel Gibson's beachside trailer in the 1998 buddy-cop comedy *Lethal Weapon 4*, Paradise Cove has been the site of some of Hollywood's most memorable moments. In fact…well, no, we wouldn't want to jump the shark too early by telling you its relationship to the nostalgic 1970s sitcom *Happy Days*.

Paradise Cove's history begins, like much of Southern California's, with the Chumash people, whose ancestors had inhabited it for ten thousand years before the European invasion. The temperate south-facing coastal region has always been a land of leisure, thanks to mild weather and abundant resources. It's no coincidence that the dollar-drenched, love-versus-money plot of *Indecent Proposal* (1993) resolved on the pier here, with Woody Harrelson and Demi Moore declaring their love the victor over Robert Redford's cash with a reconciling kiss. Even the long Chumash hegemony here was due to money. The pearlescent shells they gathered and polished in the waters off the coast were used as currency among tribes as far away as Arizona. They were almost literally minting money—until the Spanish came along and raided the party.

With the Friars' forced relocation of the Chumash to work as slaves at Mission San Buenaventura (the 1782 basilica is still standing, and worth a visit in laid-back, present-day Ventura, California) the cove was largely forgotten by its subsequent string of European "owners," and left to commercial fishermen and smugglers of Chinese laborers. Time passed. The Pacific Coast Highway was routed through the area in the late 1920s and introduced the Cove to the modern motorist. Private interests built the Cove's now-iconic pier in 1945. A few year's after that, Paradise Cove was discovered, like a teen model at a soda fountain, by Hollywood filmmakers.

The Cove had its first brush with Tinseltown in 1950, when star photographer J. R. Eyerman employed it as a backdrop to shoot a series of black-and-white photos of a 26-year-old Marilyn Monroe. The shapely starlet, who had only the year before made ripples in the Marx Brothers film *Love Happy* (1949), was on the verge of breakout stardom when she posed for Eyerman's lens. Snuggling herself in a jacket on the bluff—her impossibly long bare gams all goosebumps in the Pacific wind—Monroe smiled as the shutter clicked away, then lounged on a bench with the Cove's pier behind her for more. What was the impetus for the shoot? The story goes that the photographs were used in a promotional campaign that advertised Chiclets gum in Mexico.

The first major Hollywood production to film at Paradise Cove seems to have been the seminal beach movie, *Gidget* (1959), which, any movie buff worth his saltwater knows, is the single biggest factor in the mainstreaming of surfing culture in the United States."

*Gidget* tells the story of a diminutive, vivacious teenager who charms her way into the masculine, nascent surf culture of Malibu. Longtime American readers might recall that there is a real Gidget: Kathy Kohner Zuckerman, whose father launched the franchise with a novel based on his daughter's adventures on the beaches near the family home in Pacific Palisades. (See the Winter 2015 issue of *American Road* for our feature on Kathy. She did in fact lose her home to the 2025 fire.)

**LAND OF GOLDEN SAND:** [Opposite] A seagull perches atop a signpost at Paradise Cove, a beach widely considered among the finest on the California coast. The private enclave lies north of Malibu and attracts artists, surfers, celebrities, and sun-seekers alike to its shore. Film directors consider it to be the most picturesque stretch of sand and sea in the Golden State and have made it famous on screens big and small.

#ParadiseCoveMalibu
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Beach © Benny Marty. Seagull on signpost © CMB Images.

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**ON SAFARI:** If places have attitudes, Paradise Cove and the surf scene are one and the same. The Beach Boys knew this. They posed at Paradise Cove for the cover of their 1962 album *Surfin' Safari*, wearing the plaid, flannel Pendleton shirts that were *de rigueur* with local surfers. *Surfboards photo © Davide Marzotto.*

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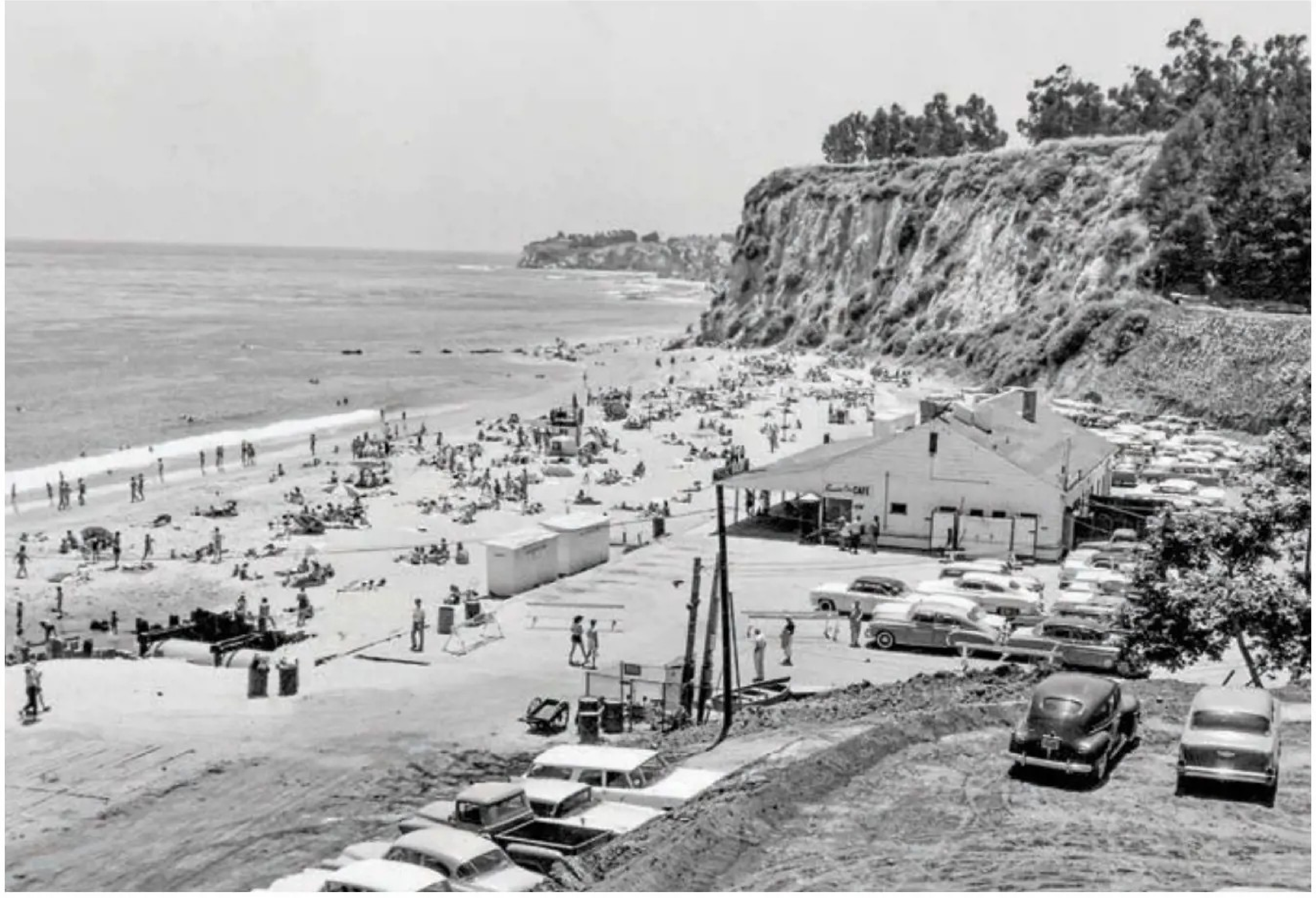

After the premiere of *Gidget*, Paradise Cove became a popular filming location for many productions that required rolling waves. In addition to reprising its Gidget role in the 1960s television series starring Sally Field, it appeared in other sand, sun, and fun movies of the era, including the Frankie Avalon-Annette Funicello vehicles *Beach Blanket Bingo* (1965) and just-as-fabulously-titled *How To Stuff a Wild Bikini* (1965). The former film had silent comedian Buster Keaton chasing the scantily clad Bobbie Shaw Chance up the Cove at surf's edge. ("It's a wiggly beach," observed one of the kids looking on.)

The early 1960s saw Lloyd Bridges emerge from Paradise Cove each week in the subaquatic action adventure series *Sea Hunt*. Bridges played Mike Nelson—a freelance scuba diver, former Navy frogman, and underwater detective—who spent his time fighting crime, wrestling octopuses, and locating everything from sunken ships to downed satellites on the ocean's floor. In real life, Bridges came to the role with little experience diving into the briny—he complained about the weight of his twin air tanks during topside retakes until the art director designed twin tanks made of balsa wood and had them painted silver. But as the series progressed, he trained—and took to performing most of his own stunts. Scuba diving was then in its infancy, and many baby boomers were introduced to the activity through the show. In his book, *I Thought I Saw Atlantis*, pioneer diver Albert Tillman called *Sea Hunt*, "diving's visual recruiter." No other show before or since has encouraged more Americans to explore the oceans with an air hose.

Paradise Cove
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**SAUCY SIDES:** [Top] By the mid-1950s, Paradise Cove was already a popular destination. Today it continues to be defined by the Paradise Cove Beach Cafe [above and below] which serves up rich memories alongside its coconut shrimp and iced seafood towers. [Right] Inside the cafe, visitors may encounter a portrait of Marilyn Monroe. The rising Hollywood sex symbol posed at Paradise Cove for *Life* magazine photographer J.R. Eyerman in 1952.

HANG TEN SPECIALS
CATCH A WAVE

TV GUIDE
Local Listings · June 27-July 3
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Lloyd Bridges of 'Sea Hunt'

Paradise Cove Beach Cafe sign © 4k-Clips. Marilyn portrait © Cavan Images. Paradise Cover Beach Cafe exterior courtesy Kent Kanouse,

> **"Given the times, it was almost inevitable that 'The Fonz' face a shark somewhere—and that's what happened in 'Hollywood: Part 3.'"**

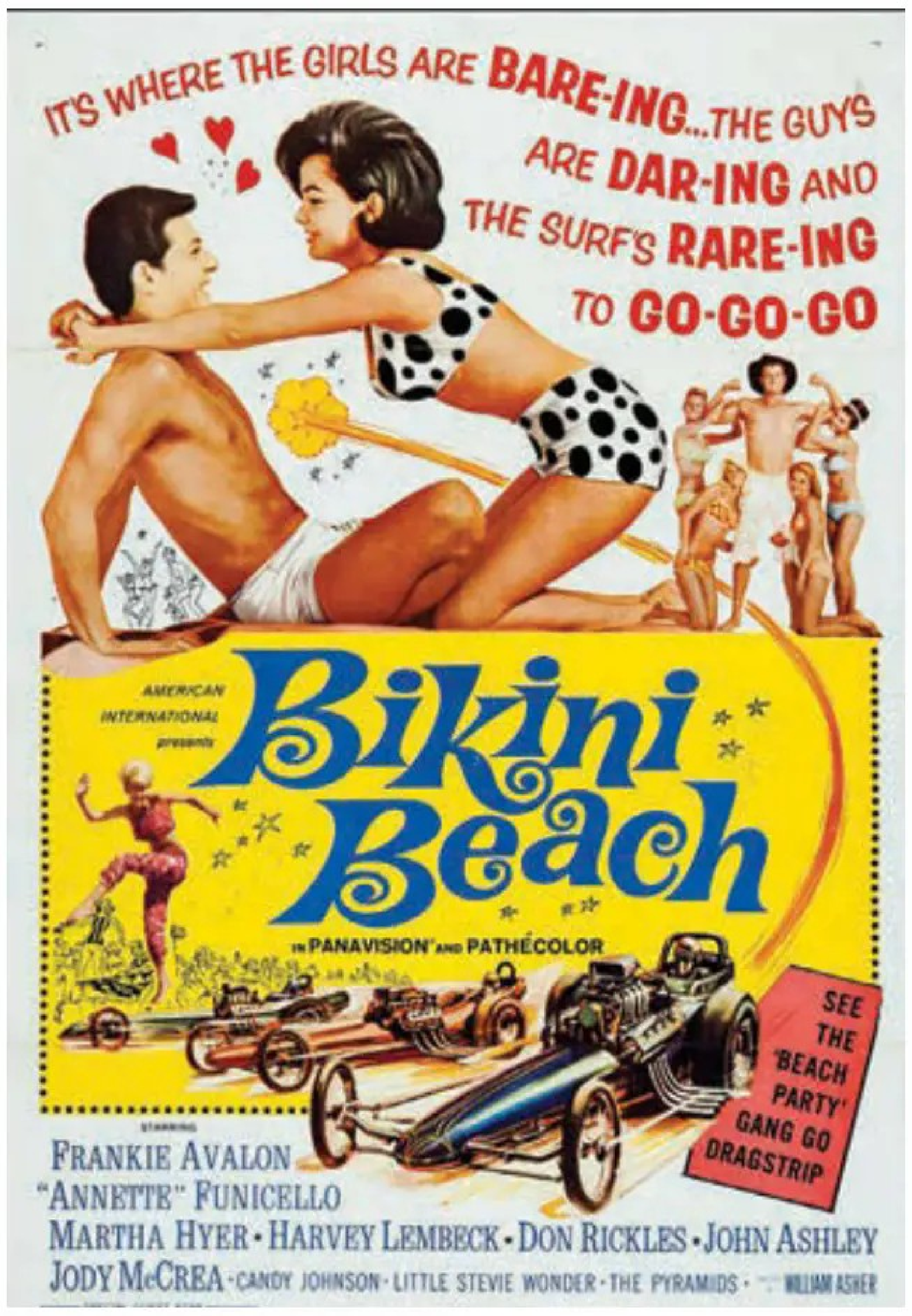
B-grade monster movies have long been made at Paradise Cove. These creature features have showcased the rampages of delightfully ridiculous mutants—from the giant, saucer-eyed mollusks of *The Monster That Challenged the World* (1957) to the rubbery, atomic turtle in *The Phantom from 10,000 Leagues* (1955). But while goofy scares are fun, no Paradise Cove horror show is celebrated for its sheer silliness more than the September 23, 1965, episode of the creepy CBS comedy *The Munsters*. The episode is titled "Herman, the Master Spy," and it finds the gruesome family from 1313 Mockingbird Lane heading to Paradise Cove for a day at the beach. (Son Eddie brings a surfboard that is little more than a coffin lid with a fin attached, and matriarch Lily packs a jar of ants to ensure a spoiled picnic.) Arriving at the seaside, Frankenstein-faced dad Herman sets out scuba diving until he's snagged in a net cast by a Russian trawler. The boat's crew becomes convinced they have landed "the missing link between fish and man."

The beach appears "as itself" in this outing, and the fact that the family has the famous strand to themselves is explained by a single line of dialogue. "It certainly was strange, dear," Herman says to Lily, "those hundreds of people running off the beach just as we arrived."

Additional artistic endeavors have discovered use for Paradise Cove, right up to the present day. You want music videos from pop divas? We got 'em across the decades—from Madonna's "Cherish" in the MTV heyday of 1989 to Britney Spears' "Sometimes" ten years later. Or perhaps you were watching the Disney Channel as a twenty-oughts tween? You likely saw Miley Cyrus slicing her own stretch of sand and doing The Swim in the video of "Best of Both Worlds," in *Hannah Montana: The Movie* (2009).

At the other end of the spectrum: According to his biographer, not even Jack Nicholson has seen *The Rebel Rousers*, a violent biker flick filmed in 1967 but not released until 1970, following Nicholson's hit turn in *Easy Rider*. But you can check out the stills featuring fellow cast members Bruce Dern, Harry Dean Stanton, and Diane Ladd displayed inside the Paradise Cove Beach Cafe—*the* place to grab a bite and a bit of nostalgia at Paradise Cove for decades.

But really, for all those glorious and not-so-glorious Hollywood moments, none holds a candle to the scene that created the trope of "jumping the shark."—i.e., that episode, scene, or, in real life, turning point where a project with integrity suddenly loses all credibility. The year was 1977. Plenty of folks were still afraid to go into the water because of 1975's toothy thriller *Jaws*. *Happy Days* was in its fifth season, and television's #1 hit. Actor Henry Winkler, as the show's slick-haired biker-coolcat Arthur "Fonzie" Fonzarelli was a national sensation. Given the times, it was almost inevitable that "The Fonz" face a shark somewhere—and that's what happened in the Happy Days episode "Hollywood: Part 3."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**THIN AND FRILLY:** [Above] Many movies in the American International Pictures *Beach Party* series were filmed at Paradise Cove—including the eponymous first film (released in 1963) and its last, *Ghost in the Invisible Bikini* (1966). "There was a feeling of freedom we all had, a real sense of fun and innocence that I don't think you can capture today," frequent star Annette Funicello once said about making the carefree, sandy series.

**CHANNEL SURFING:** *Happy Days* was not the first TV show to film at Paradise Cove. *Sea Hunt* [opposite] made good use of the beach, as did the 1974 episode of *Columbo* "An Exercise in Fatality" [above]. The most goofy program filmed on site was likely *The Munsters*' 1965 episode "Herman, the Master Spy," which saw the creepy family vacationing at the shore and its Frankenstein-faced patriarch caught up in the fishing net of a Russian trawler.

The story, as actor Henry Winkler told journalist Terry Gross on NPR, is that he had been a waterski instructor as a teen in Pennsylvania, and his father pestered him “every day, to tell [*Happy Days* showrunner] Garry Marshall that I could water-ski.”

“‘Dad, I don’t think I’m going to do that,’ Winkler replied.

“‘No, no!” his father persisted. “Tell him you water-ski. It’s very important.”

“I finally tell Garry, ‘My father wants you to know I water-ski,’” Winkler says.

Cut to the *Happy Days* episode “Hollywood, Part 3,” wherein Fonzie visits Tinseltown to undergo a screen test. Fonzie is challenged to a water-skiing duel by local hero “the California Kid,” with the tie breaker being a challenge to jump over a menacing Great White contained in a netted area off shore. Of the several minutes of water-skiing leading up to the stunt, Winkler says, “I did all the water-skiing except for the jump itself.” As for the scene becoming a symbol of irreversible decline, Winkler believes the shtick didn’t bother the audience, because “We were #1 for years after that.”

Winkler, by the way, was one of the tens of thousands evacuated from the Palisades Fire, although his home in the adjacent neighborhood of Brentwood survived.

Restaurateur Bob Morris, who operates the Paradise Cove Beach Cafe, is thankful that his longtime business survives, although heartbroken that so much of Malibu has suffered damage. When *American Road* reached him shortly after the fire, told us, “I was in tears driving up the Pacific Coast Highway today. It’s a war zone here. But I’ve got, like, forty-five [volunteers from the community] digging ditches to help repair the gas pipes that were broken in the fire.” He chokes up audibly, then says with determination, “But we’re gonna reopen this restaurant, and invite everyone in Malibu to the opening party. Everyone in Los Angeles. We’re going to build it back. We’re not gonna give up.” Morris says he doesn’t expect talk of the Fonz or the shark at Paradise Cove to ever fade.

Happy Days it seems, will be here again.

---

**POP AMHEARST** is a Department Editor at **AMERICAN ROAD.**

**PIER ONE:** "The Paradise Cove Pier is not just a feature, but an experience," one Malibu-area realtor has famously written. The pier, which is maintained by the Roberts family, is celebrated as an icon that reflects the classic Southern Californian beach style. *Photo © Davide Marzotto.*

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## Colgate Clock
## Jersey City, New Jersey

BY KARRAS STRASBURG

Timing is everything in music. It drives a beat, moves the feet, and gives the drum roll its soul. For that reason, it is unthinkable that a great rock anthem should be cut short. But when Bill Haley was recording the 1950s song "Rock Around the Clock," he nearly ran out of minutes to make it.

Haley and his Comets were late for their recording session—en route from Philadelphia to New York—when their car ferry ran aground on a sandbar in the middle of the Delaware River. Once freed and with wheels firmly on the northern shore, they raced up US Highway 9, but arrived at the Decca studio two hours late. Scheduling constraints—and the persistence of one stubborn producer who insisted the band dawdle over the throwaway song "Thirteen Women"—ensured that "Rock Around the Clock" was afforded a mere thirty minutes of attention at the end of the session. Yet although the track was laid down hastily, it became a timeless classic.

One wonders if Haley's final push to capture his hit on wax was in any way inspired by the sight of the Colgate clock, a towering timepiece that was even then brightly knocking off the minutes above the Hudson River. Installed in 1924, the giant illuminated dial had a face everyone looked toward when the going got late. It stood atop Colgate-Palmolive headquarters near the Exchange District in Jersey City, the second such clock constructed for the firm by the Seth Thomas Clock company of Connecticut. Morning, noon, and night, it provided the time to Manhattanites and Brooklynites, glowing with an intensity that nearly outshone the moon.

Colgate had chosen the clock's eight-sided shape in homage to its Octagon All-Purpose Soap, which by the 1920s had become a household staple. Whittled by bits into washtubs across America, it served for detergent in its day. Dishwashers swore the lye cakes never cracked their hands. Little kids climbed into bathtubs with its shavings, bidden to wash up on Saturday nights.

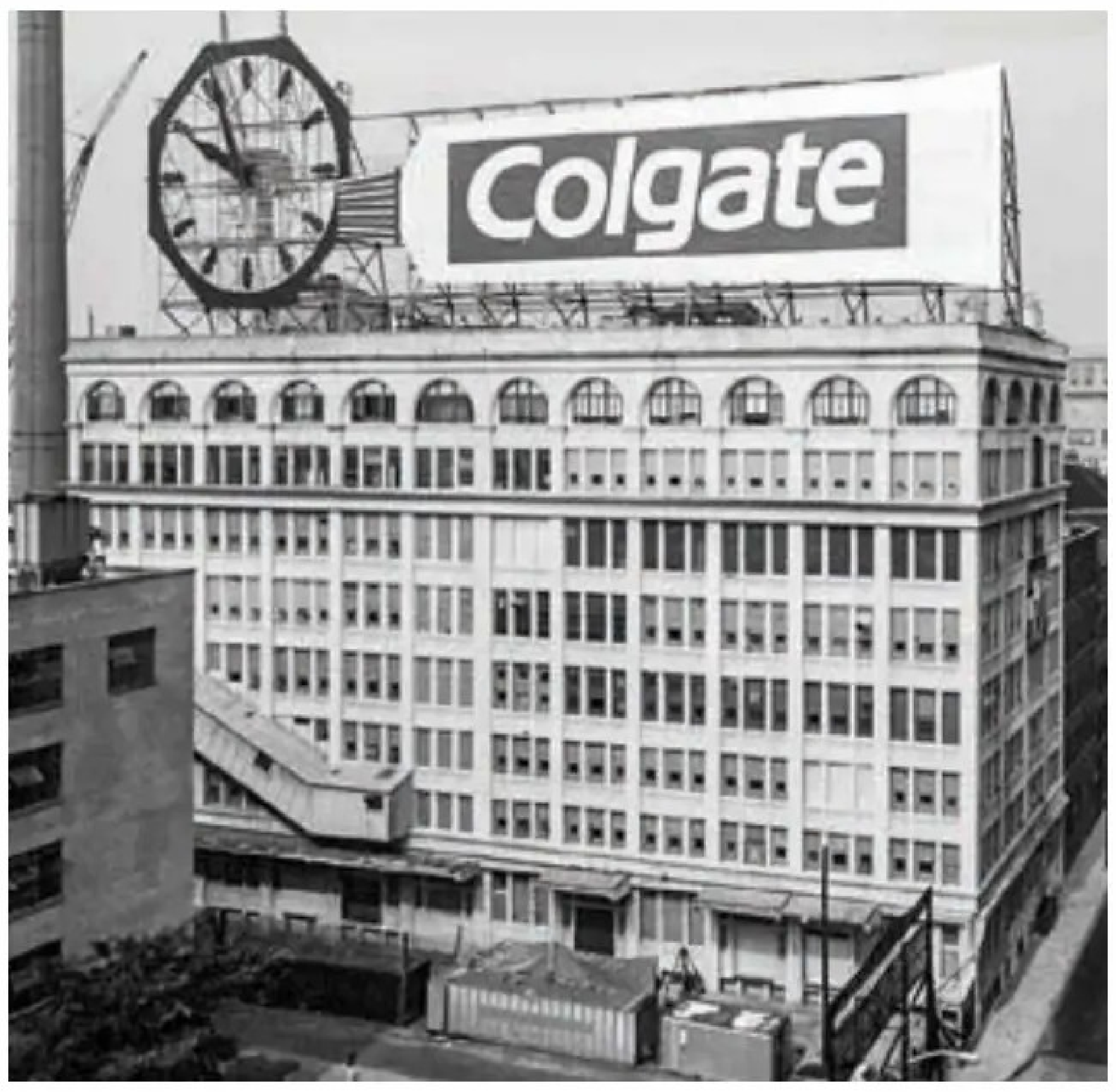
INTERSTATE
78

The clock was set in motion on December 1, 1924, when Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague ceremoniously threw a switch that started its cogs and sprockets turning. Onlookers were enchanted. Newsmen gushed over the horological knowledge that could create such a wonder. "It is immense," the *Boston Globe* reported. "The entire weight of hands and movement is four tons, or about equal to the weight of 64,000 women's wrist watches.... The minute hand is twenty-seven feet, three inches long, and the hours hand is nineteen feet, six inches long." Students of history noted that the only clock to approach Colgate's in size was that of St. Rumbold's Cathedral in Mechelen, Belgium, built in 1705 by Jacob Willmore and damaged beyond repair during the German invasion of 1914. This new Colgate clock was indisputably the largest working clock in the world.

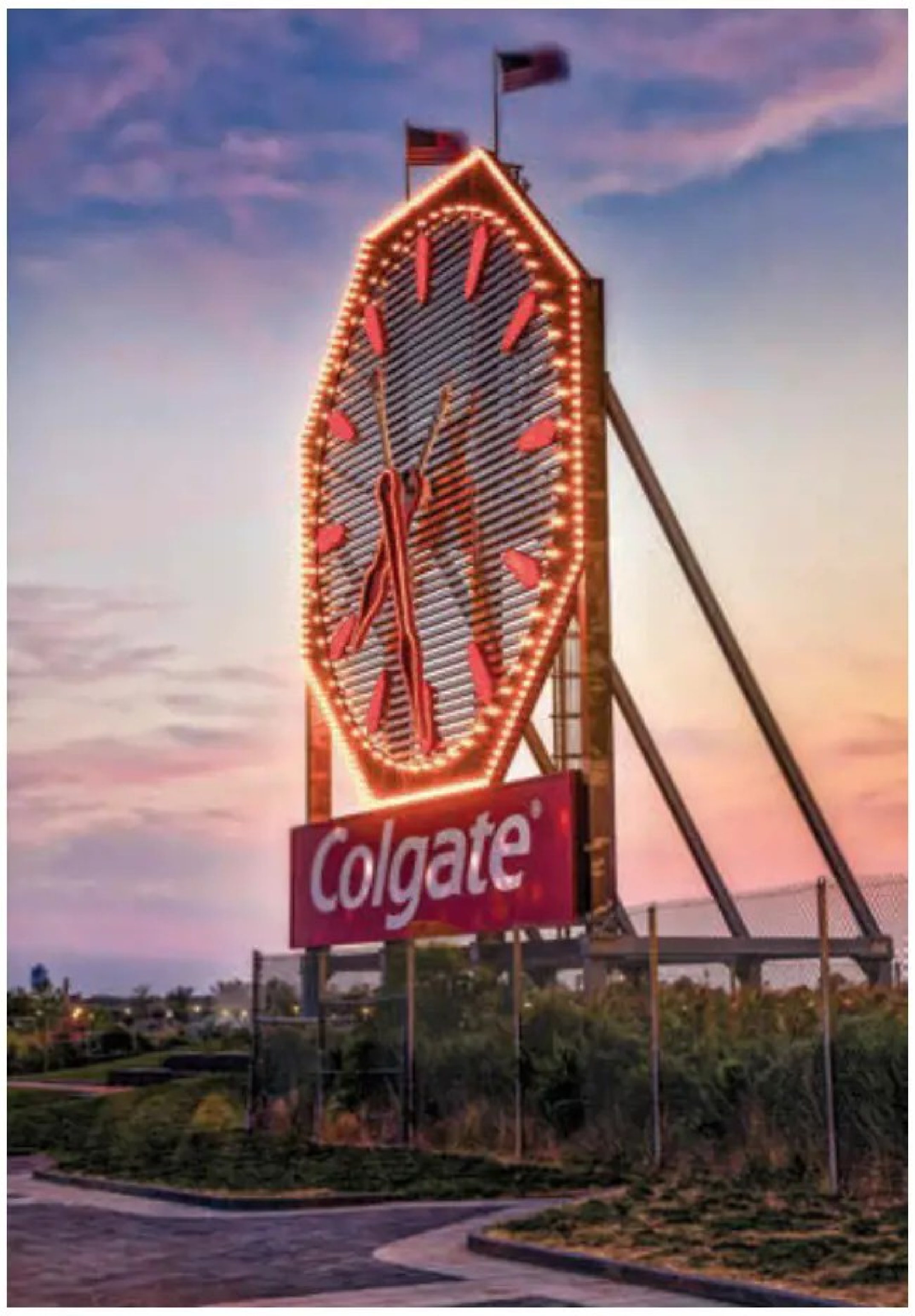
Over the years, maintaining the mammoth timepiece has presented big challenges. During its early years, workmen were routinely called to refurbish any number of the clock's black, coffin-shaped five-minute marks. Through the ensuing decades, its original laminated wooden hands grew waterlogged and heavy from rain, until they were replaced in 1955 with a pair fashioned of porcelained steel over aluminum. After the Colgate company left Jersey City in 1988, the clock was lowered to the ground. Today, it stands on a grassy lot adjacent to the Goldman Sachs tower, bearing a burnished metal face and burning with piercing LED lights that suggest it could keep the hours forever.

Bill Haley's anthem, of course, is still hot, too. "Rock Around the Clock" became a nostalgic juggernaut after it was chosen as the first-season theme song of the 1970s TV show *Happy Days*. Recently, fans have considered the song in light of Colgate's giant dial. Calculating by the sweep of the minute hand how far a physical trip around the clock would take them, they've concluded that Haley's classic would require more than twenty-one miles to be realized, 12 to 12—and every foot of that distance toe-tapping.

**KARRAS STRASBURG** is a Department Editor at AMERICAN ROAD. Large photo © 4k-Clips. Historical photo courtesy Library of Congress. Overhead night © Wjy960126. Manhattan skyline © James Andrews. Vertical night © Susan Candelario.



**THE BIG TIME:** [Above and below] "It is a very Titan of horologes, a Gargantua among the eaters of time," newspapers reported when the current Colgate clock started ticking in 1924. It's still gobbling up the hours: In the course of a day, the minute hand travels three-quarters of a mile.



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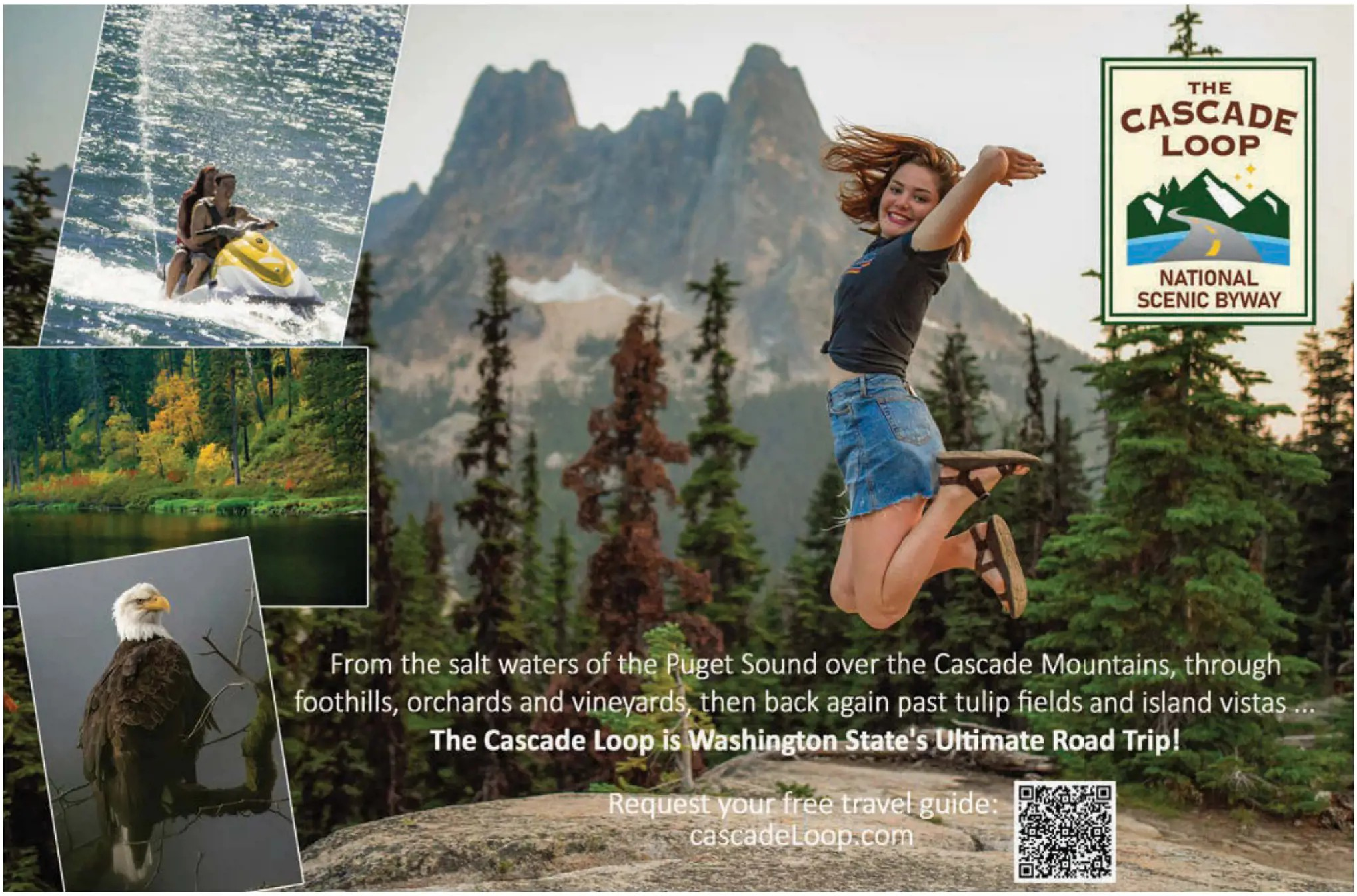

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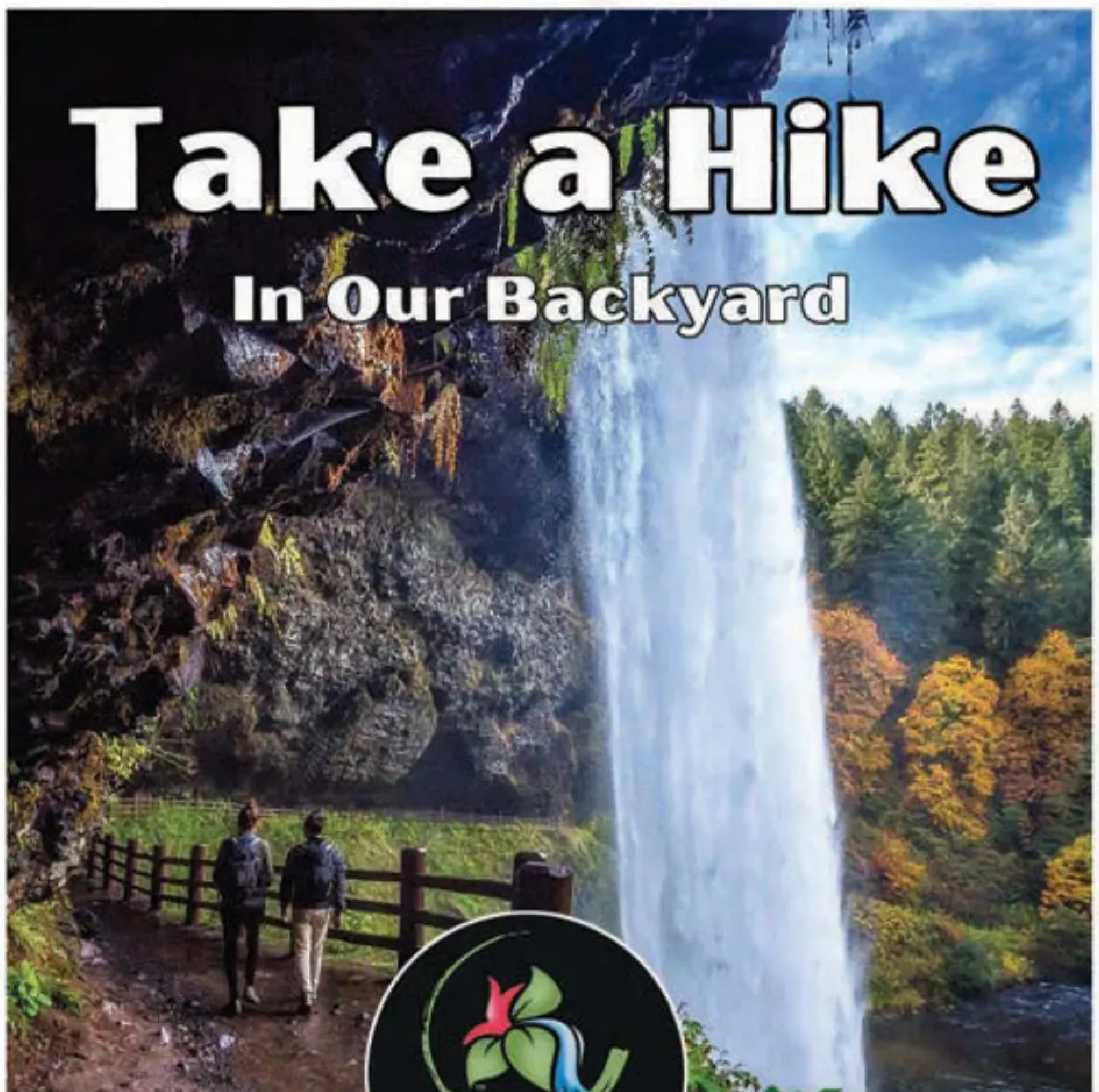

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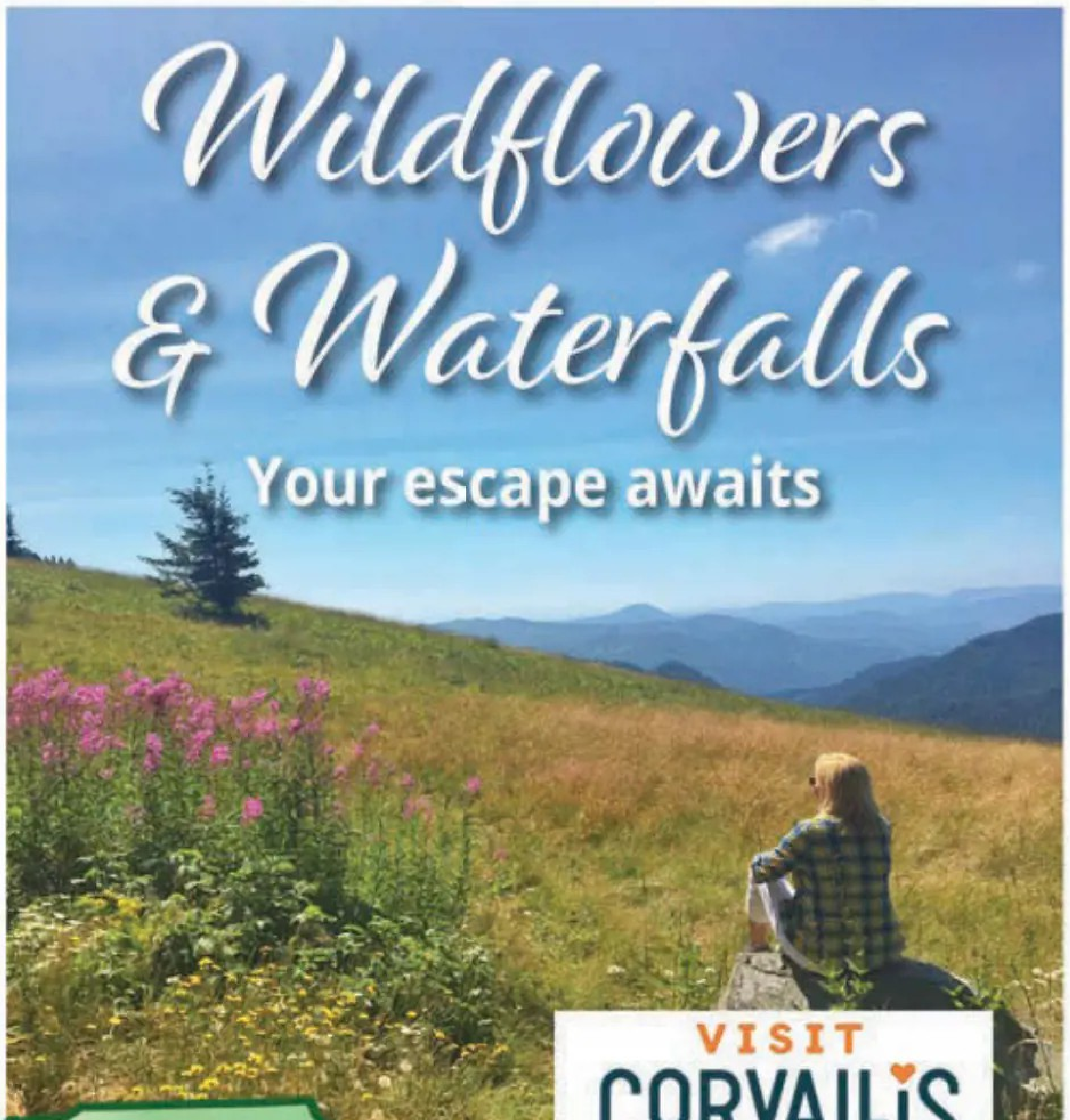

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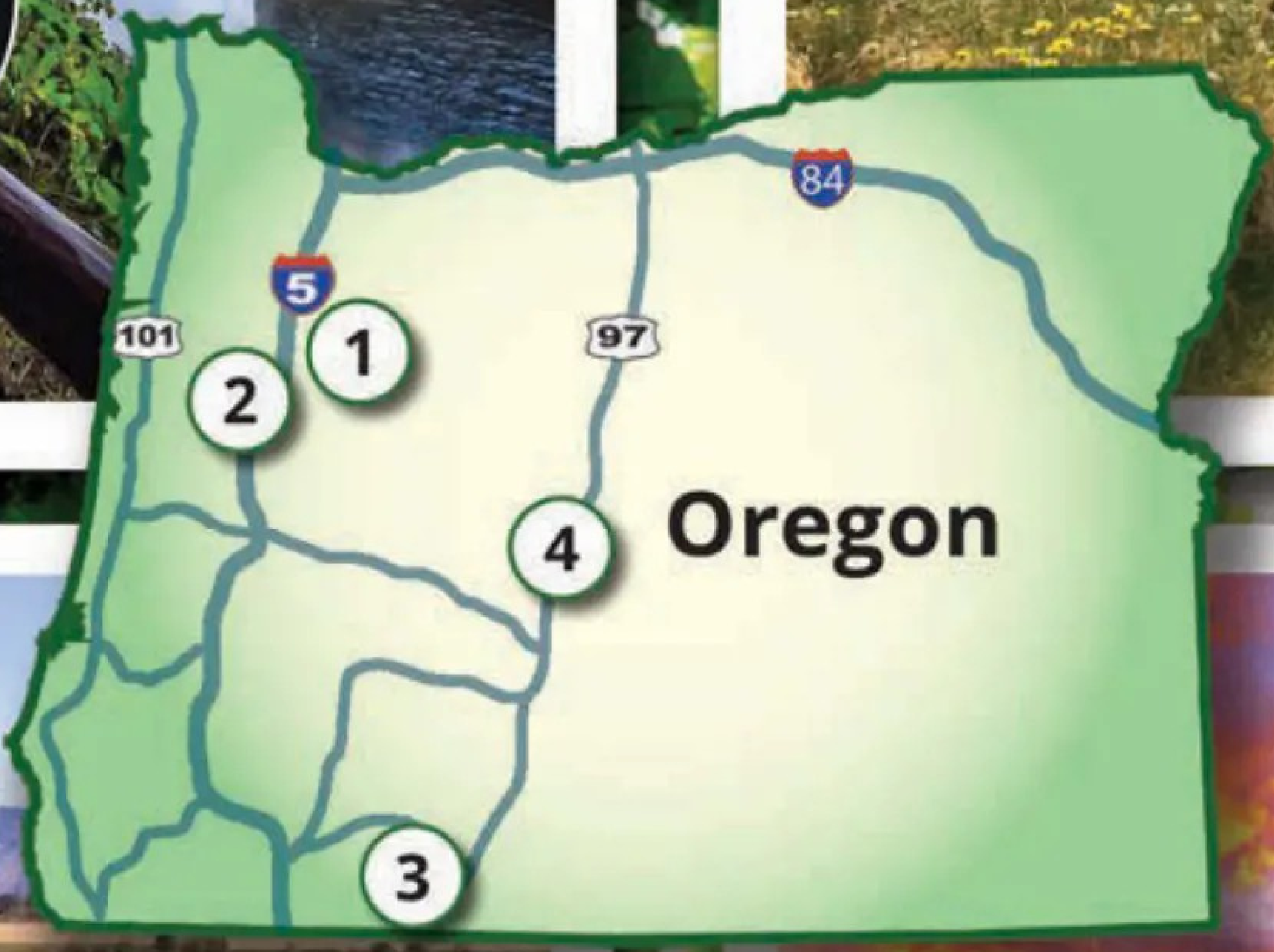

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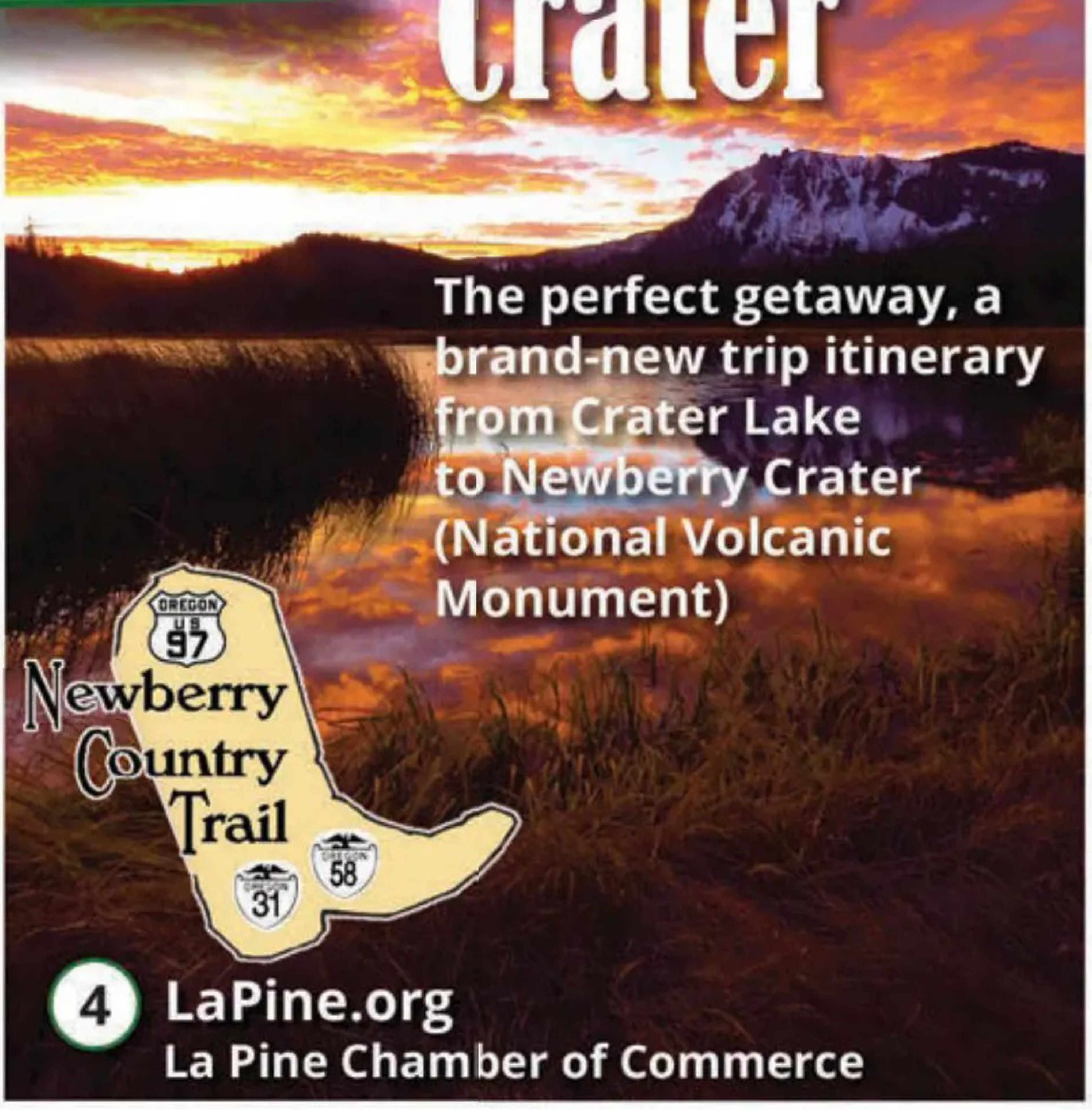

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# TRACING THE OREGON TRAIL

FROM WAGON TRACKS TO THE COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY

• BY MATTHEW ANDERSON

## "National Neon"

Relative to the size of the building, the neon ENTRANCE sign above the front door is tiny. When it's off, like most neon signs, it's nigh invisible.

That's the beauty of neon, though. When that sign is lit, everything changes. Illuminated, it beckons visitors into a world of warm nostalgia and bright, flickering color.

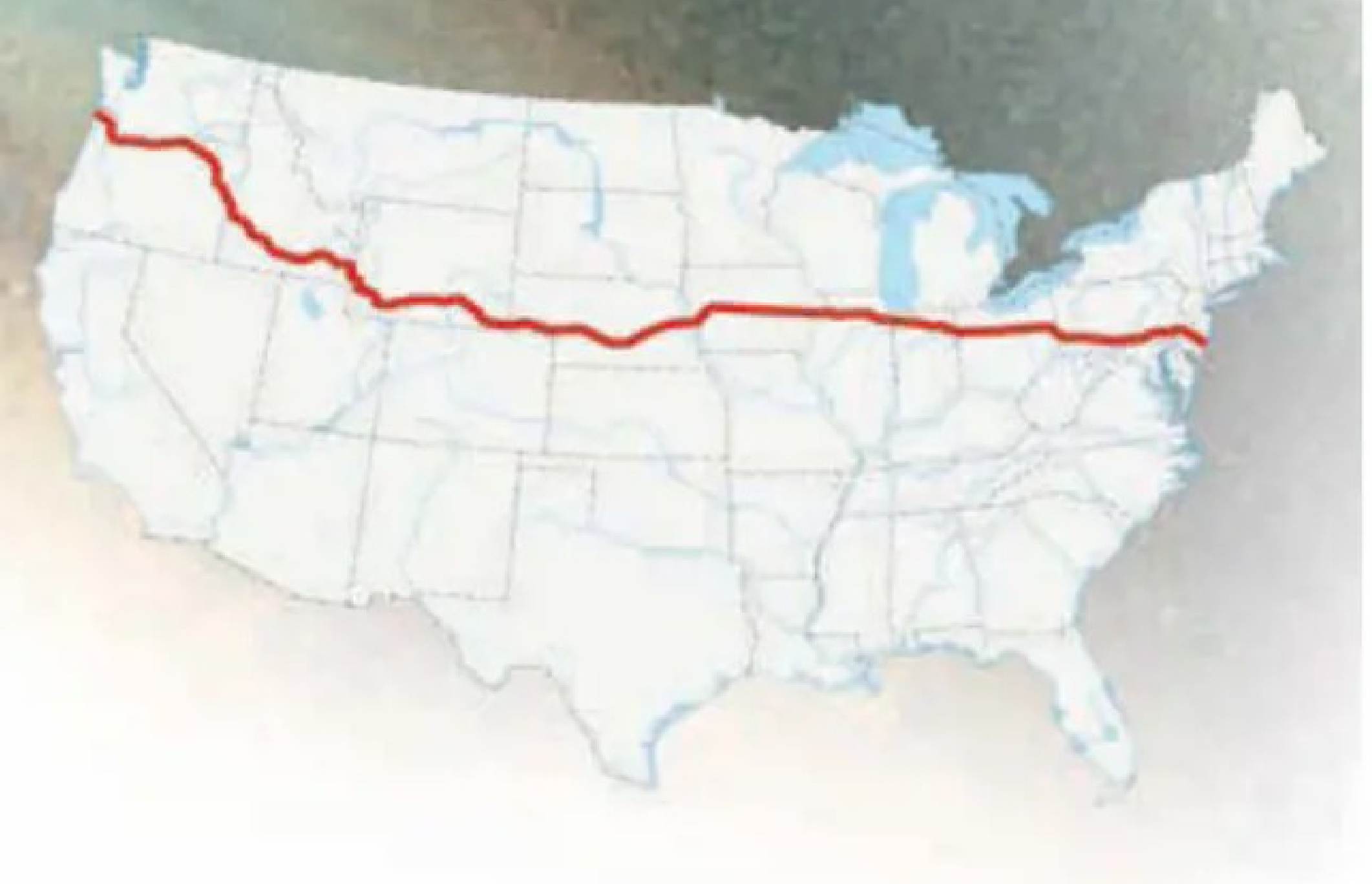
Inside the door of the National Neon Sign Museum in The Dalles, Oregon, signage is everywhere. The first stop is the ticket counter—easy enough to find, given the blue neon WAITING ROOM/TICKET OFFICE block letters and yellow arrow. Like the ENTRANCE sign, this pointer does its duty. And, like the rest of the neon art at the museum, it has a story.

The sign was plucked from history by prodigious collector David Benko, the museum's executive director. It once directed travelers to the ticket area at the grand Union Station in St. Louis. Benko's thrilled to have in his collection a vintage photograph of this sign in its heyday, hanging above a room packed with soldiers and other well-dressed Missouri travelers. The image, taken by a photographer from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, shows holiday passengers on December 20, 1958, waiting for crowded trains that will, presumably, take them home. Another image from April of that year, shot from the other end of the massive station, shows Benko's sign above benches of travelers talking and reading newspapers.

When Benko adds a sign to his collection, he performs exhaustive research to uncover its story. Sometimes he finds old photos of the sign in action. Other times, the pickings are slimmer. Take the Medich's Chicken sign, also from St. Louis. Under the restaurant's name, its neon words advertise the joint's other main offerings: STEAKS, BAR-B-Q, and (illuminated in a tasteful green) FROGS. What's the story there?

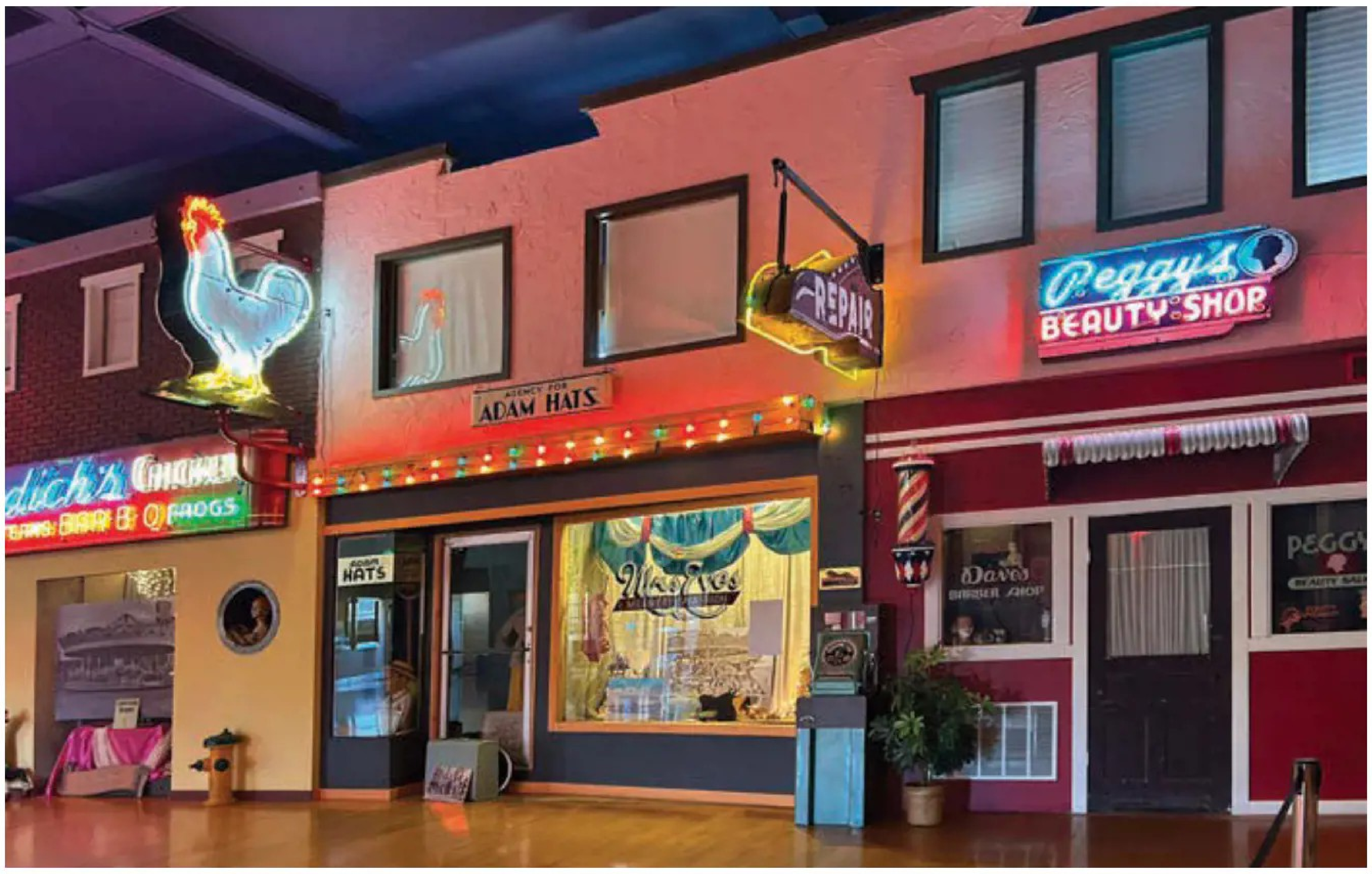
"I have never been able to find much information from anyone in St. Louis about this very fun sign," Benko admits. "One historian I know was able to tell me this: 'Medich's was in a bad part of town; it was in business for a long time, and its food was not that good.'"

Benko is an artist and sign designer by training, and he knows good design when he sees it. He got his start as a kid collecting telephone insulators. The bug having swiftly bitten, those insulators soon led to telephone signs and gas station signs. Before long, young David had stashed a hundred gas pumps in his mom's backyard. Neon was a natural next step.

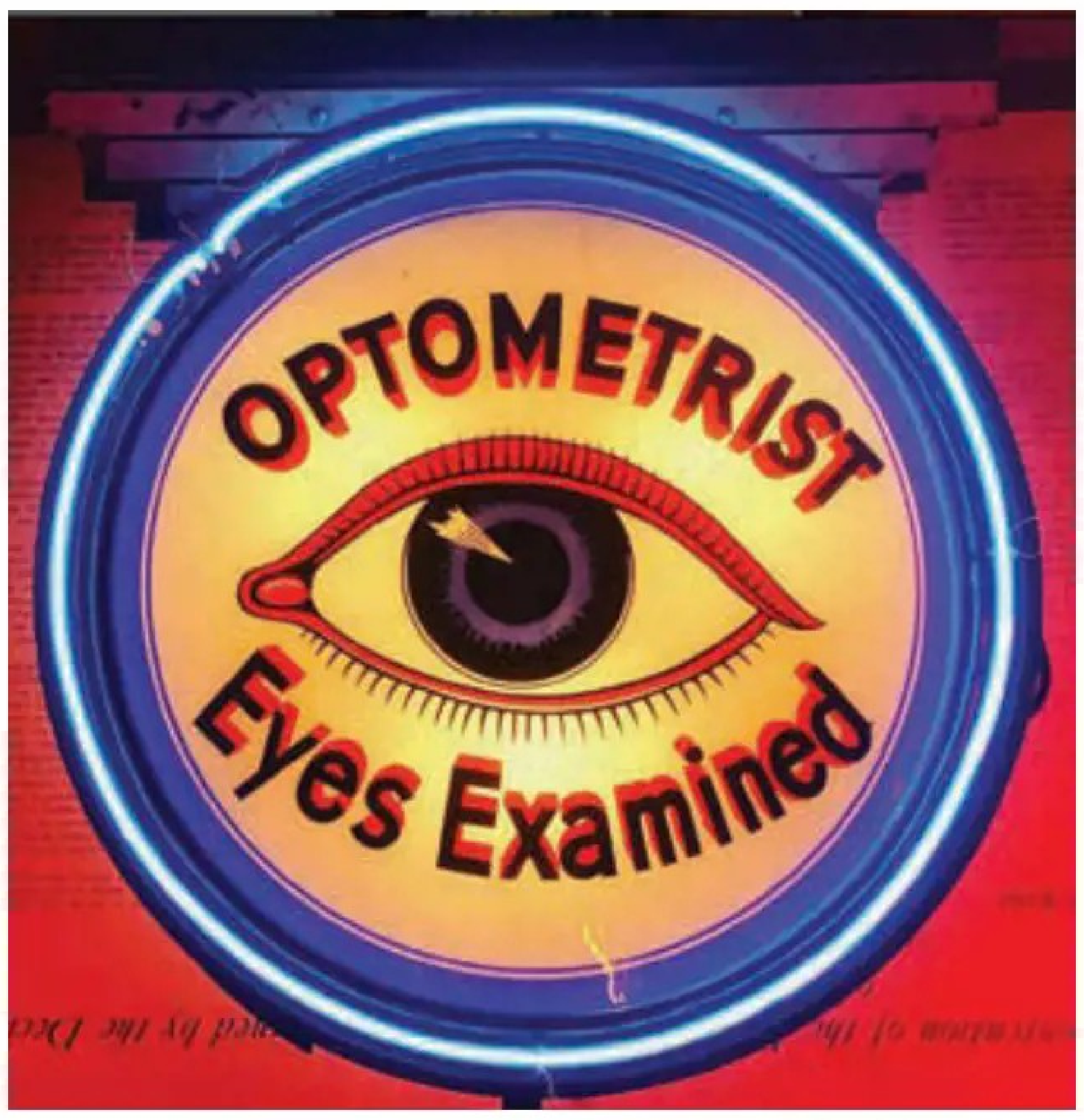


**US HIGHWAY 30** runs from Atlantic City, New Jersey, to Astoria, Oregon, via Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Idaho. In the East, it follows much of the Lincoln Highway; in the West, it traces the Oregon Trail.

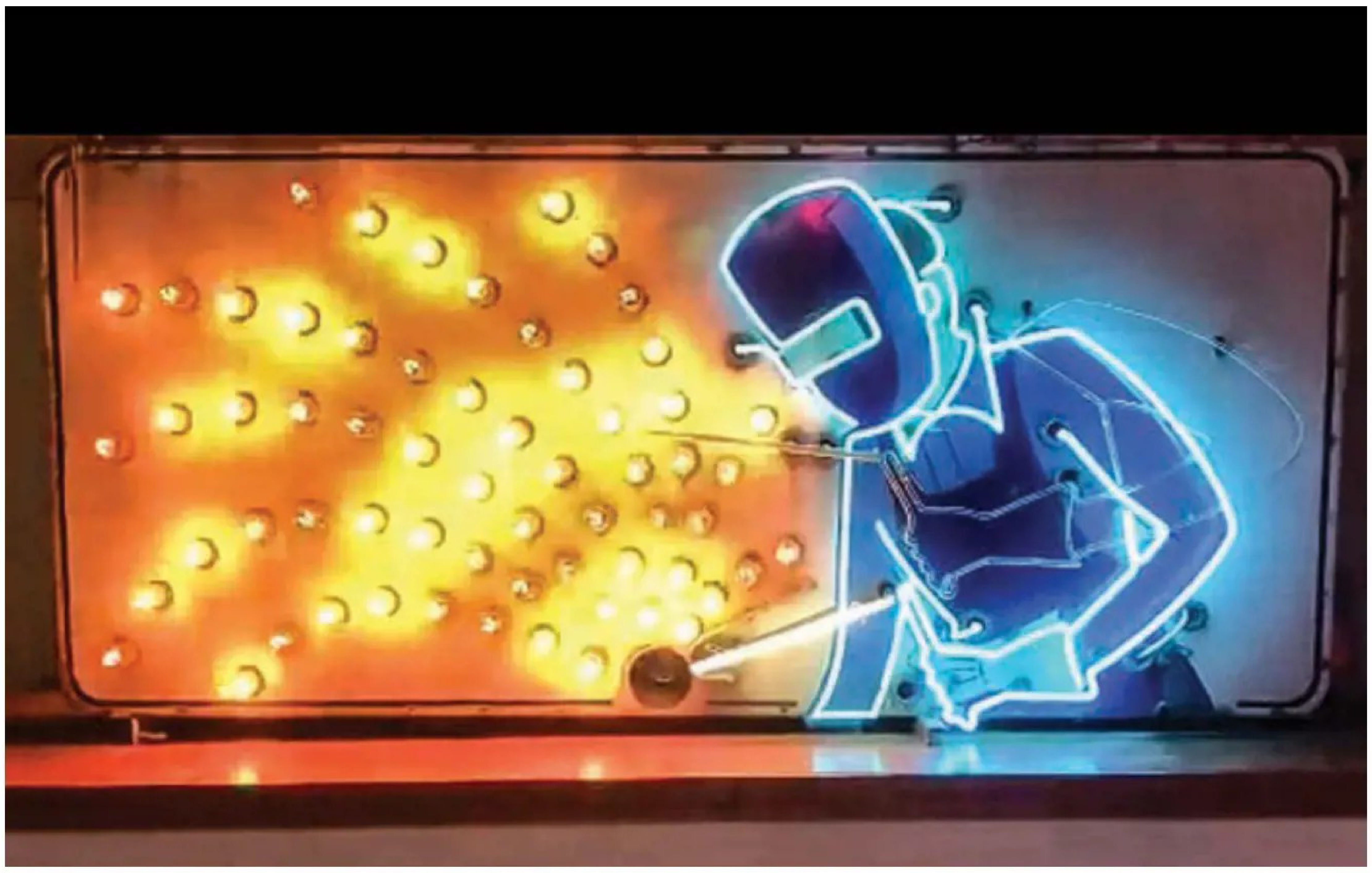
Eventually, Benko's collection grew so big and beautiful that it needed to be where neon signs were created to be—electrified and in the public eye. In 2015, the city of The Dalles gifted the empty 1910 Elks Club for the museum's use. With steps that spill onto US Highway 30 and twenty thousand square feet of neon signage and advertising memorabilia, the museum—run by Benko and his wife, Kirsten—officially opened in 2018.



**ELECTRIC AVENUES:** [Above] The National Neon Sign Museum is housed in The Dalles historic Elks Building, which was completed in 1911. [Left] Inside, signs for Peggy's Beauty Shop and Medrich's Chicken of St. Louis take visitors back to the gleaming streets of the 1950s.



**SPARKS FLY:** [Above] Whether its the face of a porcelain burger chef from the days when a burger cost 15¢—or [below] a finely lashed eye from an optometrist sign that seems to be staring at you—the National Neon Sign Museum gives visitors plenty to look at. [Below, center] The welder spraying chase lights is a particular favorite.



Benko's neon collection dates from the dawn of the medium in Paris during the early twentieth century. The museum explains neon's wax and wane well—despite containing just one of every seven to ten signs Benko owns. One of Benko's favorite signs is the centerpiece of a new section in the museum dedicated to animated neon art. The sign depicts a welder at his craft. When the bright arc touches the metal, sparks fly outward via individual incandescent bulbs.

This animated wonder began its life at a welding supply shop in Chicago sometime around the postwar period (Benko can tell because of the type of housings used in its manufacture). When the supply shop shut its doors, a regular customer bought the sign and whisked it home to rural North Dakota. For years afterward, the neon welder toiled in relative obscurity in the Upper Midwest. Only after many visits and conversations did Benko convince its owner to sell.

## On the Town

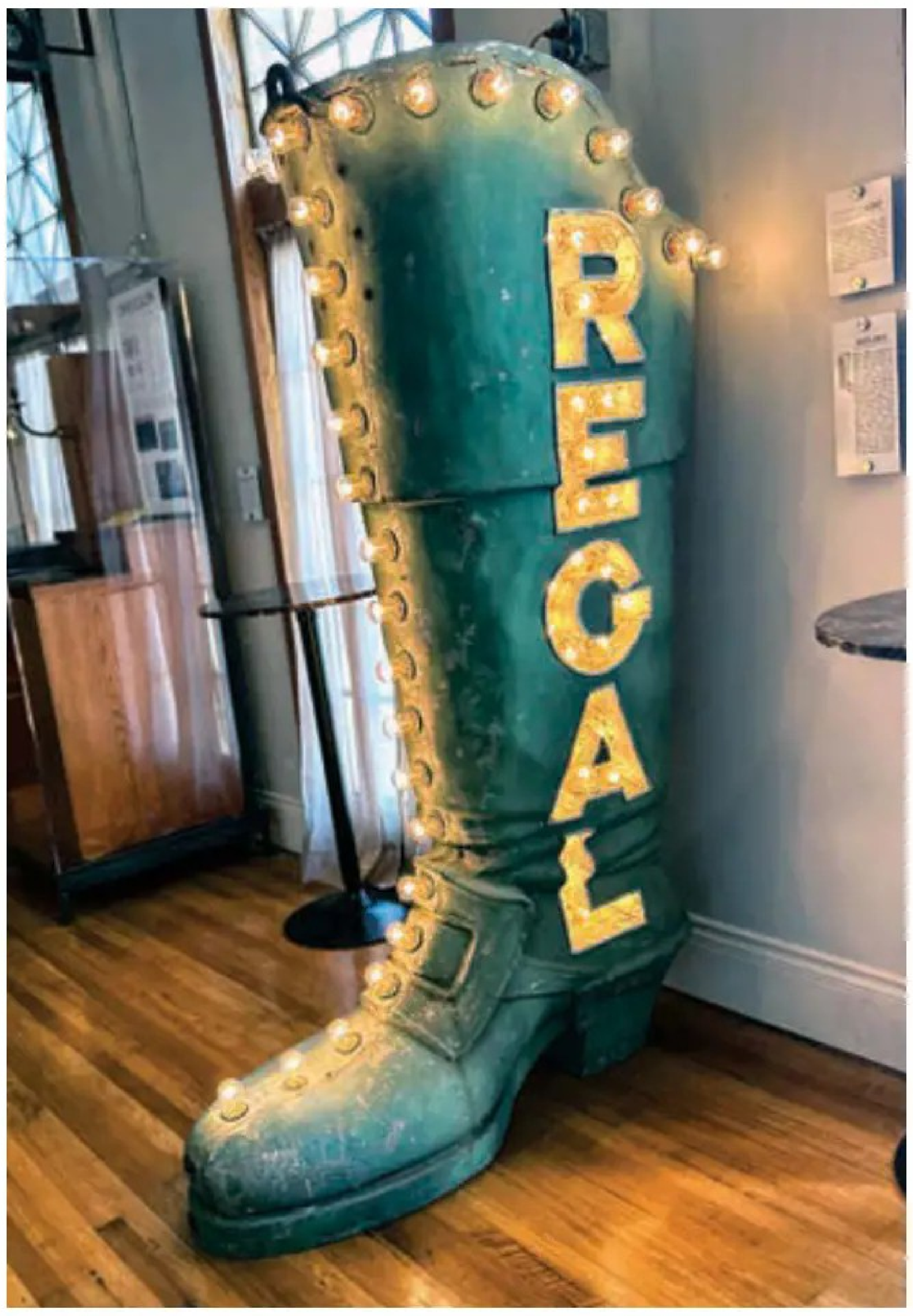
When it comes to stories, one sign on display beats all others: Town Pride Frozen Custard. The giant sign once loomed over an iconic drive-in that became something of a legend in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For Benko, the story behind this sign is bigger than just one sign's provenance. It's the story of neon itself, of music, of cars, of the spirit of an ebullient generation. "There's just something about the 1950s and 1960s that I think will always be immortalized," Benko says. "It was the birth of rock 'n' roll, and then the refining of rock 'n' roll. In one hundred years, I think people will still be fascinated by that era."

The late Thomas L. Miller might have agreed. Miller helped immortalize the era when, in 1974, he became the executive producer of the hit TV show *Happy Days*. The series was set in 1950s Milwaukee because Miller based it on his own younger years growing up in Brew City, rich with neon and sock hops and evenings at the drive-in. In 1958, he was in the first graduating class of Nicolet High School, which sits just off Whitefish Bay north of downtown and within cruising distance of several popular drive-in restaurants, including what was once Town Pride Frozen Custard.

Legend has it that when production of *Happy Days* began, the show's producers took the cast and crew to Milwaukee to experience that city's extant custard culture. What viewers see in the show's first episode—Richie swinging his moc-style slip-ons out of the back of a white convertible in front of Arnold's Drive-In, Fonzie using a red bandana to spit-shine his motorcycle while talking with two young ladies in poodle skirts—is cribbed from real-life. Back in the day, Benko says, Milwaukee teens piled into hot rods and cruised the two miles from one Town Pride to the other, up and down West Villard Avenue.

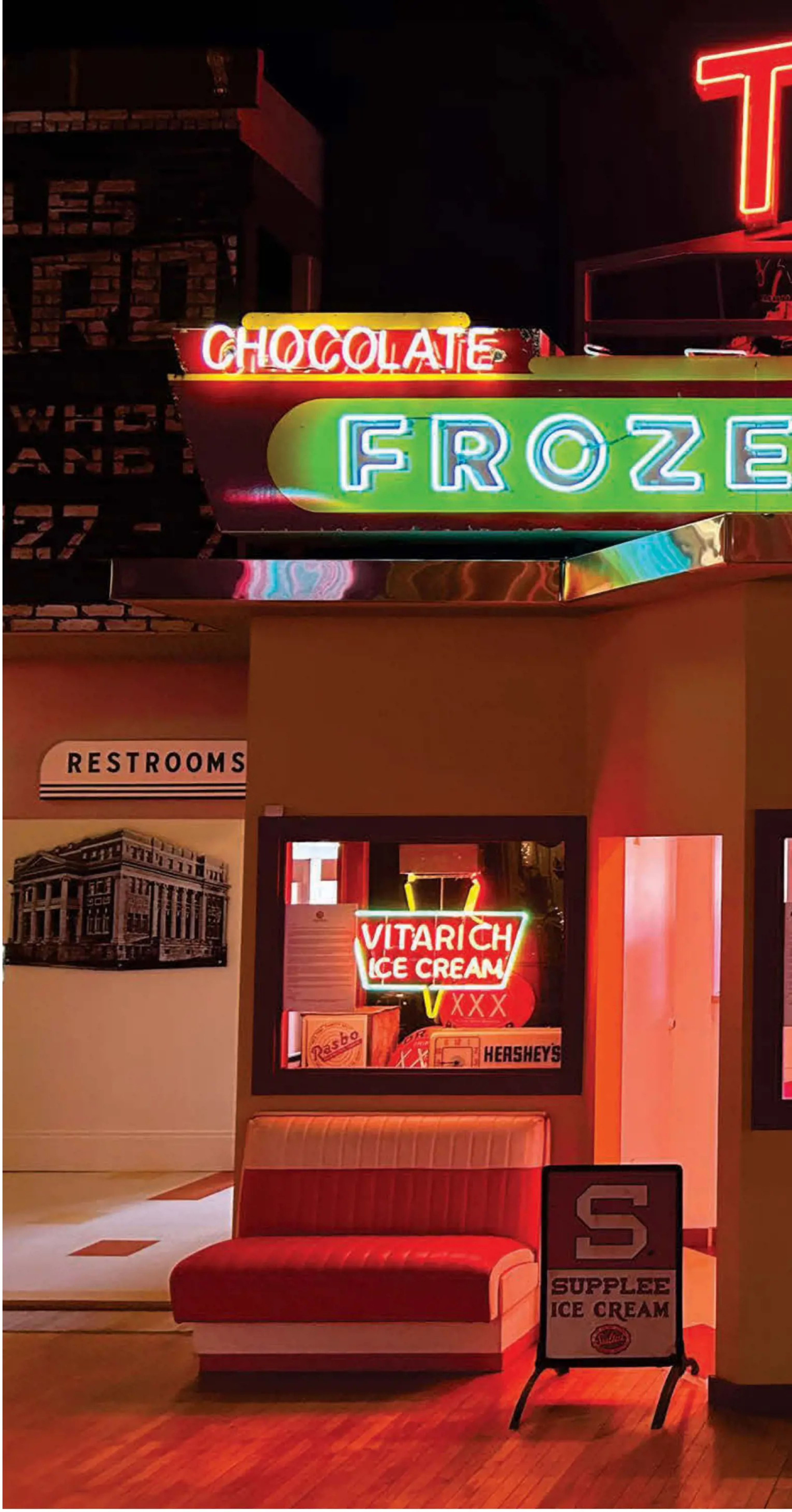
**HIDDEN SOLE:** [Right] When the Museum acquired the Regal Boot, the presence of neon letters on its side had Benko believing the sign dated from the 1930s. Restoration showed, however, that old light bulb sockets lay beneath the neon—indicating that the sign was actually manufactured in the 1910s.



Images courtesy the National Neon Sign Museum.

TOWN PRIDE
FROZEN CUSTARD

**GLOWING TRIBUTE:** [Right] The Town Pride Frozen Custard marquee is the crown jewel of the National Neon Sign Museum collection. The sign dates from a day when Milwaukee could first proclaim itself the Frozen Custard Capital of the World.



Today, one of those locations is a CVS pharmacy, and the other is a grass lot bisected by a worn walking path. But the memories of the neon signs bathing the night with their glow remain romantic more than seventy years later.

As driving became more prevalent in postwar America, bigger, brighter, and simpler signage became increasingly important. After all, Benko says, it can be hard to read a hand-painted sign when you're rolling past at fifty-five miles per hour. Among the best-known features of American neon—and something that distinguishes it from neon signage used in Europe or Asia—was the prevalence of cartoon characters and other large images in its designs, Benko says.

"You know an image can convey a lot without words, right? A good image is going to tell you exactly what's going on. I think one of the really cool signs early on was a picture of kind of a hot rod. The front of it is smashed, with a little smoke coming out of it, and it was a restoration car shop, an auto shop. When you see that, you could almost immediately understand what type of business it advertised."

Thinking back on all his collecting, Benko settles on two types of electric ephemera as his favorite: gas pumps and neon. They tie in well together, he says, because you needed a car to see all the beautiful signs along the road, and you needed gas so you could drive up and down that road again. You still do, especially around The Dalles, Oregon. The difference is that you can still see streets of vintage neon there—when you park your car in front of the National Neon Sign Museum.

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**MATTHEW ANDERSON** is a Washington-based author and a Roadside Contributor at **AMERICAN ROAD**.

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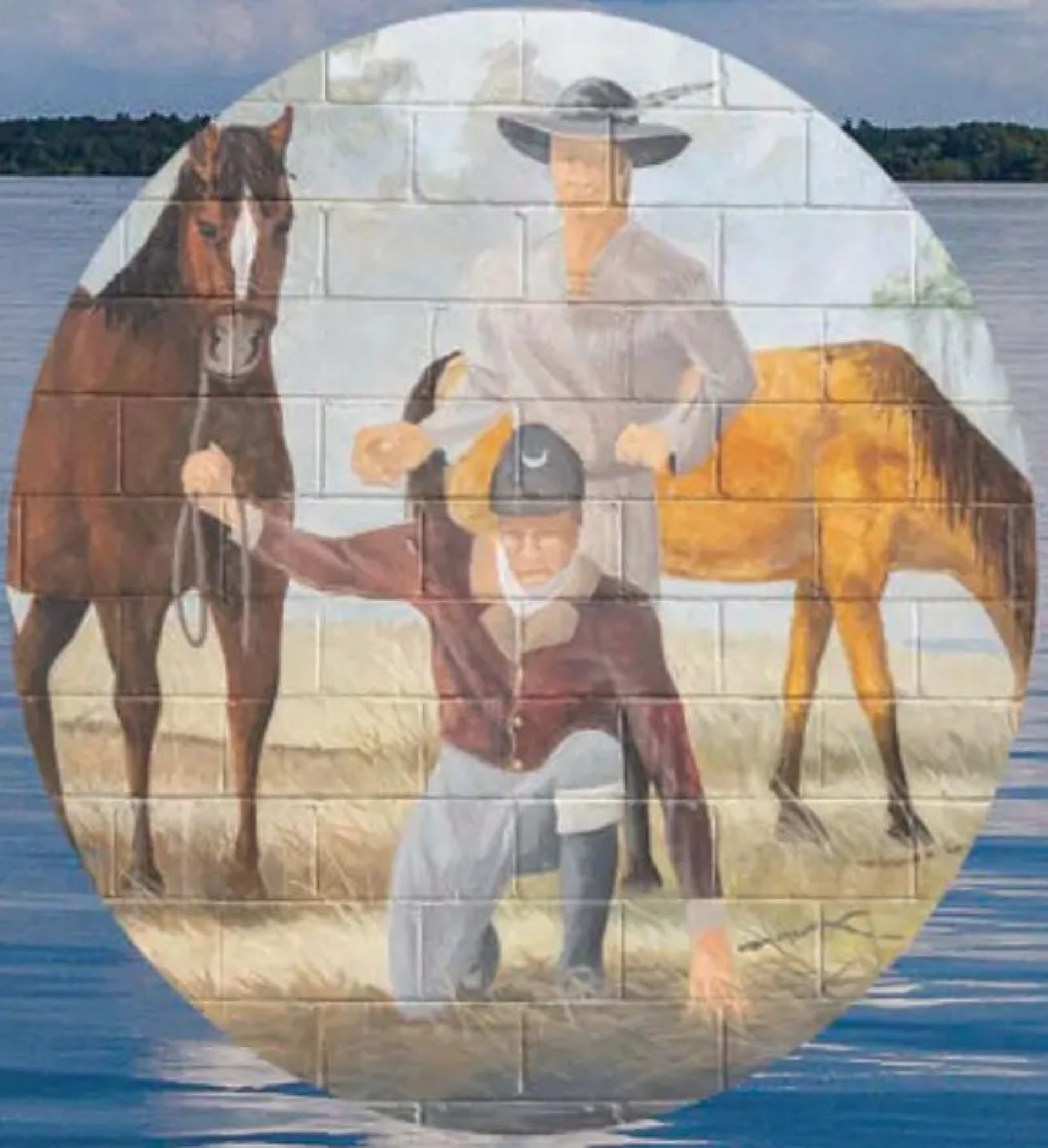

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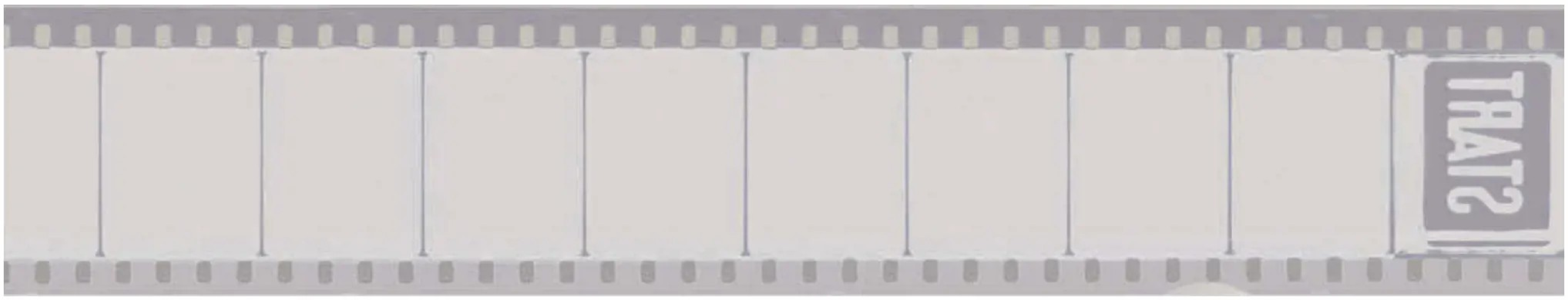
# DON MOST

## *HE'S STILL GOT IT…AND SO MUCH MORE*



Mention Don Most to nearly anyone who grew up during the 1970s, and a familiar image will materialize: Ralph Malph, the fresh-faced, affable jokester with a red jacket, a yellow jalopy, and a signature refrain delivered after one of his punchlines invariably falls flat: "I still got it!"

From 1974 to 1980, Most played best friend to Richie Cunningham (Ron Howard) and, along with Warren "Potsie" Weber (Anson Williams), completed the triumvirate of chums who—together with Arthur "The Fonz" Fonzarelli (Henry Winkler)—made *Happy Days* into appointment TV. Twenty years before NBC gave us *Friends* to laugh at, ABC's Richie, Potsie, and Ralph were the friends we needed to distract us from the grim realities of inflation, Watergate, and Vietnam.

Famous roles, as we know, tend to typecast the actors who play them. This was the reason Most left the show in season 7 and, though perhaps less recognized for the effort than he deserves to be, he's been acting, producing, and directing ever since.

Another essential detail about Most: He can sing. He can sing very, very well.

Today, Most channels his creative energy to belting out American popular standards on stage. Having traded in Ralph's red jacket for a tailored suit, Most fronts big bands and flits among jazz clubs across the country. Somehow, in between gigs, he's also managed to star in new indie film while also popping up at the inevitable *Happy Days* 50th-anniversary cast reunions.

*American Road* contributing editor Robert Klara recently sat down with Most to talk about acting, singing, and driving, and was pleased to find that Most, now 71, has still got it.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** You've been spending a lot of your time singing professionally, fronting big bands at venues around the country. What's it like doing something this ambitious at a time when others would be enjoying retirement?

**DON MOST:** Well, I was singing before I was an actor, really. I started going to school in Manhattan. I grew up in Brooklyn, and I would take the subway on Saturdays when I was, like, 13 to Manhattan to go to this school for singing, acting, and dancing. It was singing, in the beginning, that I was focused more on. And I actually got picked from that school to be part of a nightclub revue, so to speak, comprised of seven or eight kids between 14 and 16 years old. The summer I was turning 15, we were singing in the Catskill Mountains—all the nightclubs and hotels. I loved the Great American Songbook. I loved that genre.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** So, what happened?

**MOST:** I put it aside the following year. I became laser-focused on acting because of all the great movies that I was seeing as a 16-year-old in the late 1960s and early 1970s. And so that's when I put the music aside—knowing I'd get back to it at some point.

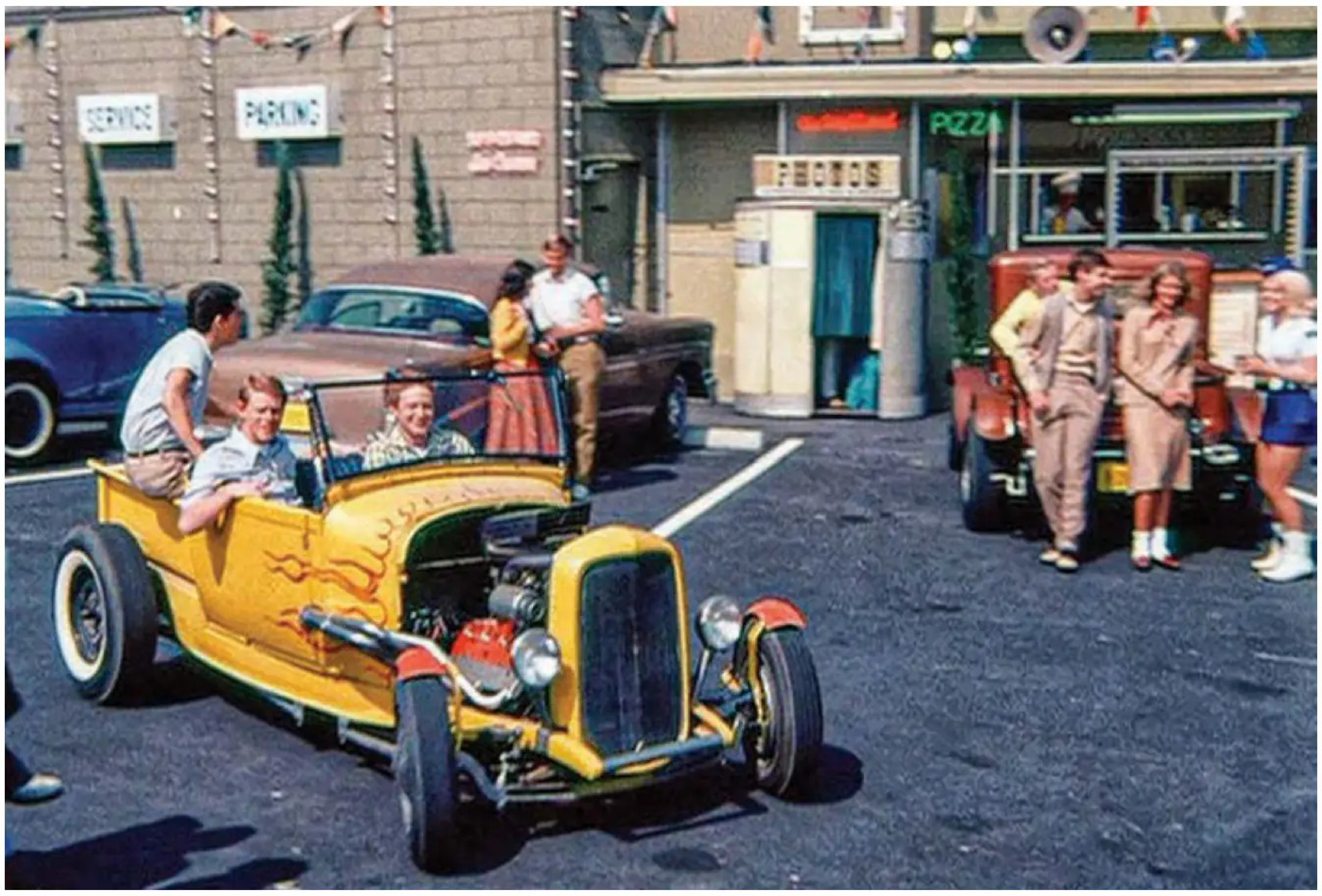
**AMERICAN ROAD:** You've appeared in film and TV for five decades now. How were you able to get back to music, finally?

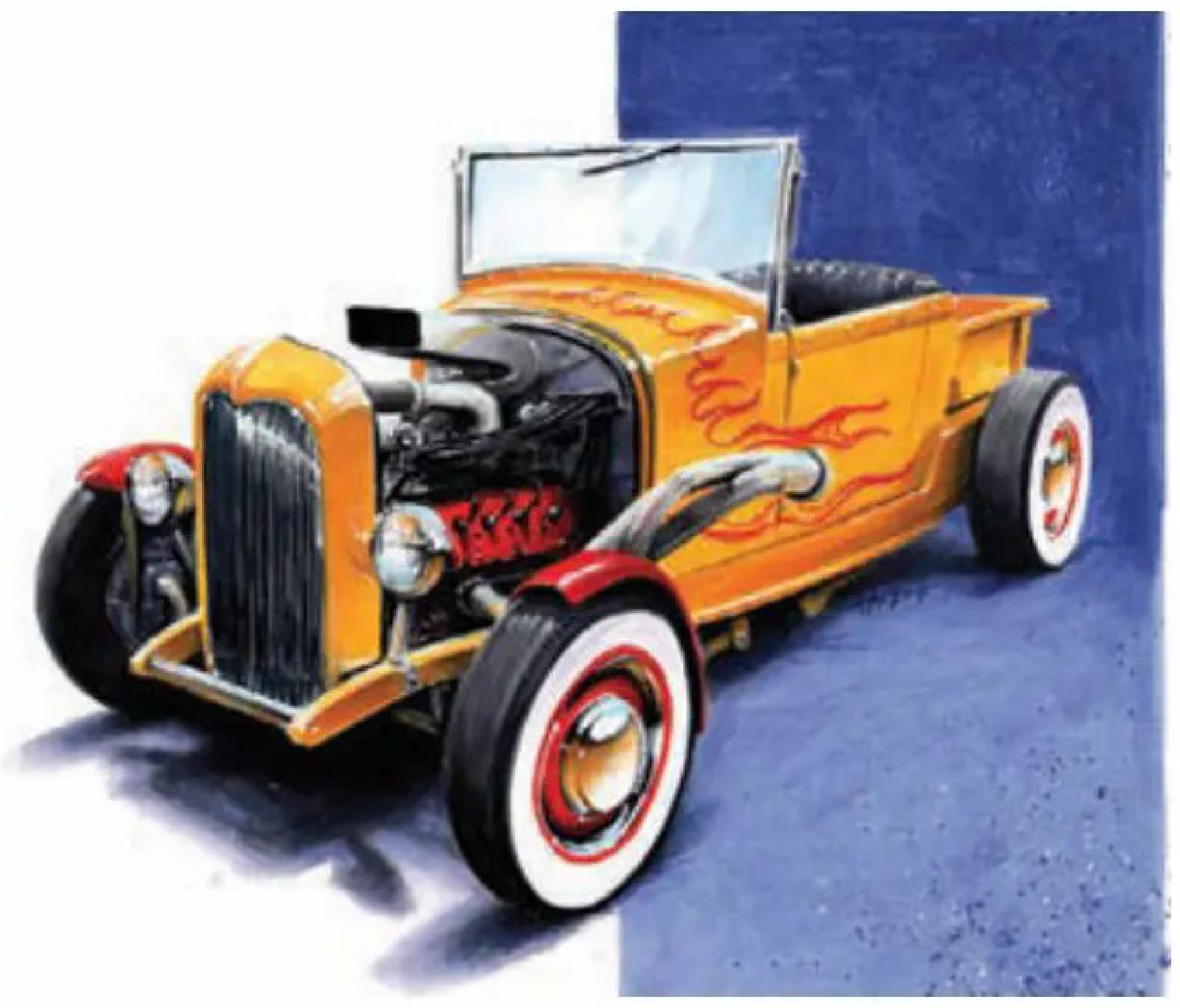
**MOST:** I decided about ten years ago that I wanted to do a show the way I'd always envisioned, inspired by my idols—Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Joe Williams with the Count Basie Band, and Bobby Darin, who I saw at the Copacabana when I was 18. I found a musical director and some great musicians, and we started doing some jazz clubs in L.A. And they went great. It was a little bit like a kid getting back on a bike because it was so in my blood. I've listened to [this music] throughout my life, even if I wasn't performing. And the response!… People were like, "How come we didn't know you sang like this? And why did Potsie get to do all of the singing?"

JEFFERSON HIGH

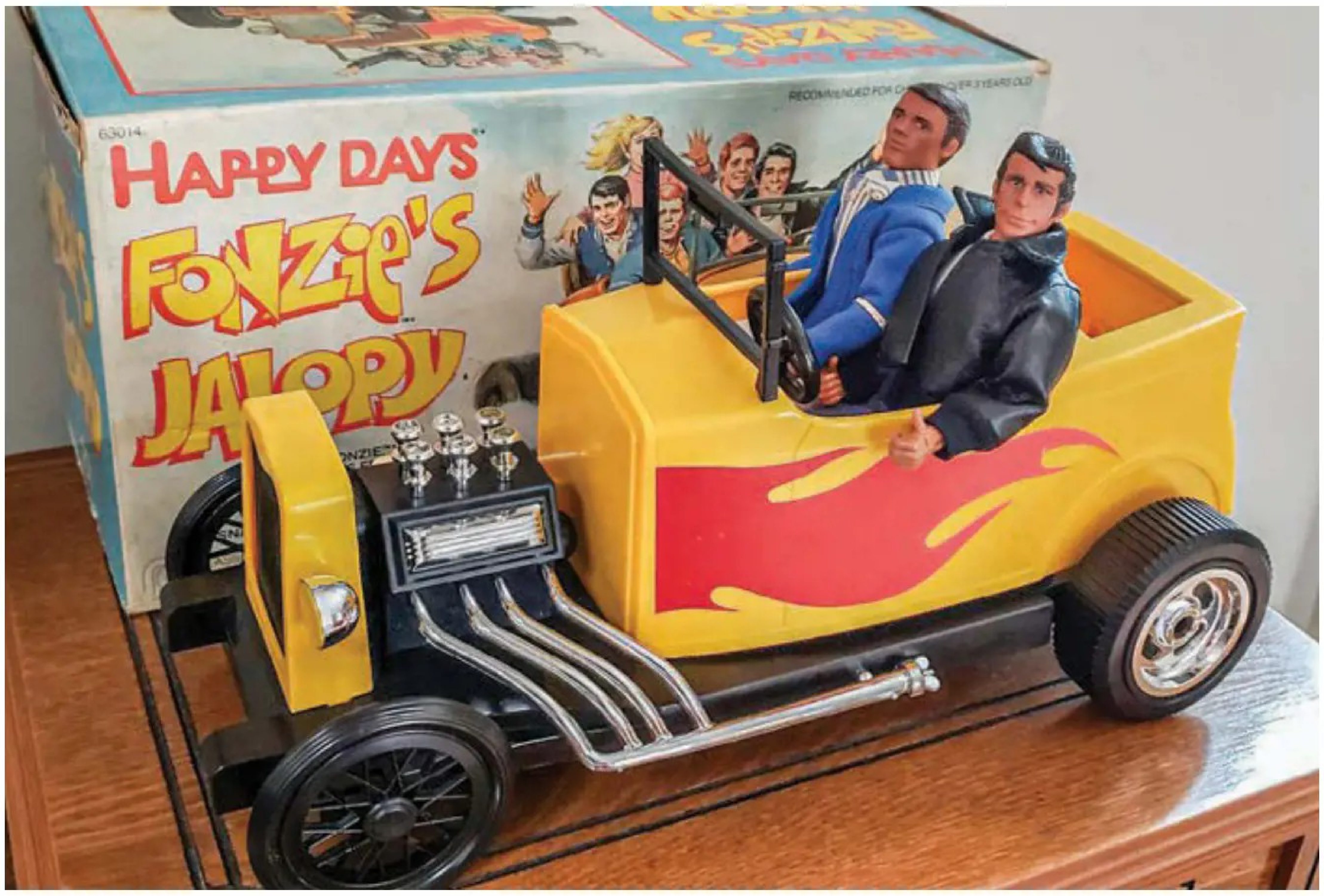
**MEET ME AT ARNOLD'S:** Don Most [back, left] played fun-loving Ralph Malph on *Happy Days* alongside [clockwise from Most] Henry Winkler as Arthur "The Fonz" Fonzarelli, Ron Howard as Richie Cunningham, and Anson Williams as Warren "Potsie" Weber.

Opening portrait courtesy Don Most.





**MOST FLASH:** [Left] Ralph Malph's ride on *Happy Days* was a souped-up 1929 Ford Model A with a 1932 grille [left]. The highboy roadster was so memorable that in 1977, Mego Corporation issued it as a toy marketed under the odd name "Fonzie's Jalopy." [Above]. In recent years, Kentucky pop artist Billy Tackett has sold art prints of his painting of the car.



**AMERICAN ROAD:** You mean Anson Williams' character on *Happy Days*. We had the pleasure of talking to him in 2020. But wait, you got to sing a little bit on the show, didn't you?

**MOST:** Yeah, a little bit. That's a whole long story. Anson, who had a musical background in theatre, had gotten to [*Happy Days* creator] Garry Marshall early in the first season and told him, "Hey, we should have a band." And Garry said, "Well, what do you play?" And he said, "No, I sing." So, he kind of got to Garry first.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** Beat you to the punch.

**MOST:** Yeah. And once he established that [band], I would sing backup. And then every once a while, they let me solo. But Anson did the lion's share. But anyway, the response was great when I [returned to singing]. We started doing it in some of the jazz clubs in New York, including 54 Below.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** That's the supper club in the basement of Studio 54, the famous disco.

**MOST:** I did it, like, five times. Then I put out a CD called *D Most Mostly Swinging*.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** There are videos online of you performing that material in 2018 along with the Orlando Jazz Orchestra.

**MOST:** That was one concert I did at Full Sail University in Orlando. It's for people wanting to learn about production—filming with cameras, sound, the whole gamut. They had a wonderful theatre, four cameras with a crane, and great multi-track recording. It's the video I use as a sort of promo reel, because of the quality.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** Speaking of cameras, your latest movie is called *Harsens Island Revenge*, a Prohibition-era story about some WWI vets in a turf battle with Detroit's Purple Gang over illegal liquor from Canada, which is right across the St. Clair River. You shot on location, didn't you?

**MOST:** It was actually filmed in Alpena, which is a little bit north of Harsens Island. It was picked because it had a great look for the time period, which is the 1920s. It takes place during Prohibition and Alpena was just perfect. It provided so many different looks.

1929 Ford and Don Most publicity photo courtesy Don Most.

I shot most of my scenes in this house that looked like it was straight out of the 1920s—not only the design, but the interior and décor.

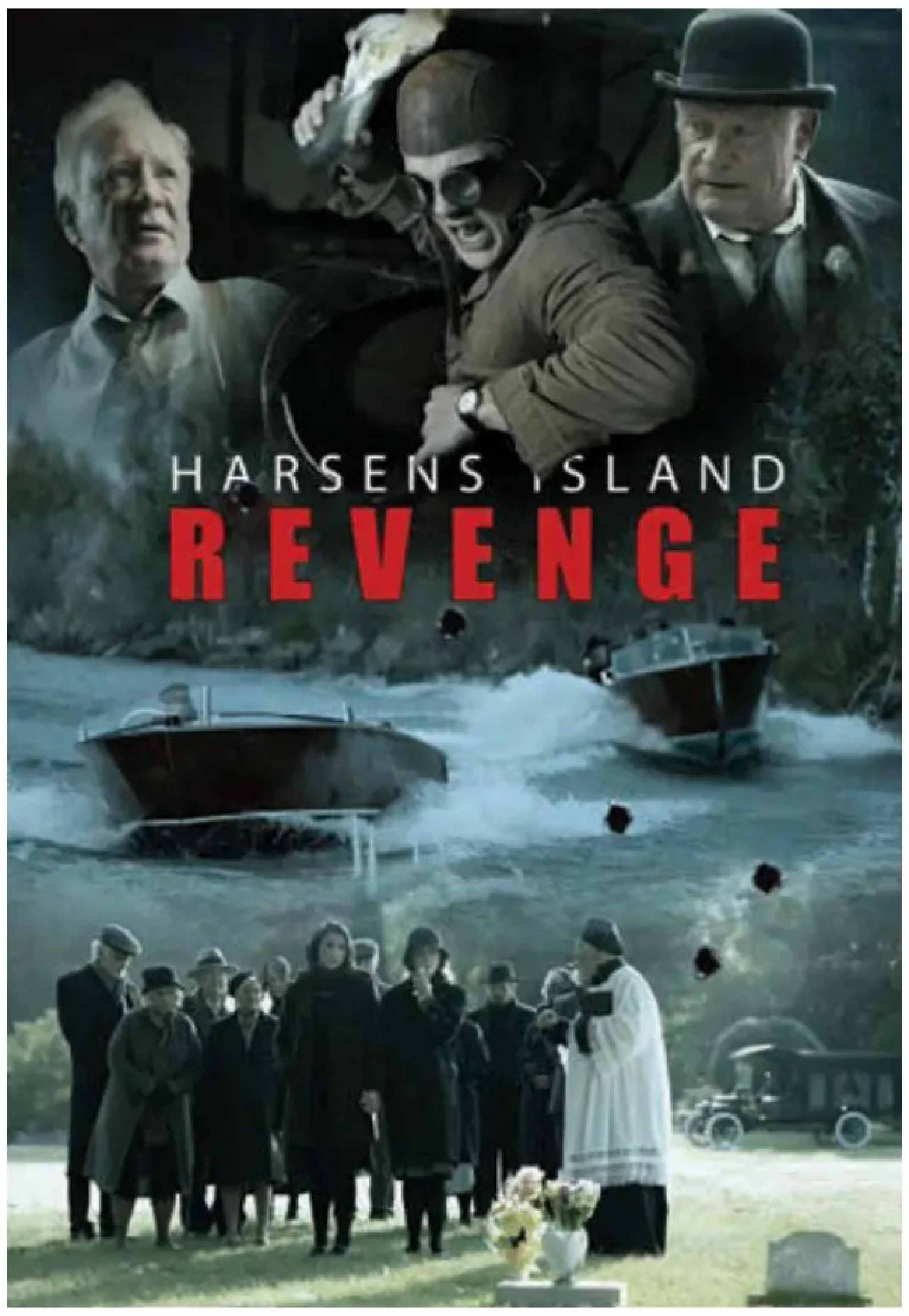
**AMERICAN ROAD:** The Purple Gang is believed to have murdered around five thousand people in the course of doing business with Al Capone. You play bootlegger Ray Burnstein. So, you're kind of a badass, aren't you?

**MOST:** Oh, big time. He was the head of the Purple Gang. It was a real story. It was a Jewish mob, but they were vicious and feared murderers. And I play the head of that mob. It was a really great role—a different role, for me—and I enjoyed it very much.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** The Internet Movie Database for you runs to several pages, but I want to go way back to 1975, to *Crazy Mama*, starring Cloris Leachman. Roadside attractions are big with us here, and that film featured a scene shot at the famous Wigwam Motel on Route 66 in San Bernardino. Do you remember anything about the place?

**MOST:** It was a wild location. We didn't stay there, but I remember shooting there. There was a scene where I, my girlfriend, and a second guy were all in this bed in the Wigwam Motel room. I definitely remember that scene.

> **"There was a scene where I, my girlfriend, and a second guy were all in this bed in the Wigwam Motel room. I definitely remember that scene."**



**AMERICAN ROAD:** That does seem like something that would stay with one, yes.

**MOST:** Cloris Leachman was wonderful to work with. Stuart Whitman was in it. Ann Sothern, who was so great. And the director—it was only his second film, a man by the name of Jonathan Demme. He went on to direct Academy Award-winning *Philadelphia* and *Silence of the Lambs*. But [*Crazy Mama*] was great, and it was a road movie. We didn't go to all the actual locations that we were supposed to be, but we were travelling around different parts of Southern California. We were a troupe.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** That must have been great for an actor in his early twenties just starting his career to get to be on the road with Hollywood greats like that.

**MOST:** Absolutely without a doubt, it was a fantastic experience.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** Let me stay on the road with you, then. When you need to go places, Don, do you like to drive?

**MOST:** When I was younger, I used to enjoy driving a lot. At this point? I don't know. I don't have the patience. At this age, I want the easiest way to get somewhere. But I'll still do some [driving.] My wife and I moved about a year and a half ago from the Los Angeles area to Colorado, near Boulder, and we packed up the car and drove. It was probably a fifteen-hour drive. We did it in a couple days. Going through Nevada and into Utah, passing some of the national parks that are gorgeous. Sections of it looked like you're in biblical times. It's just amazing. And then through Colorado, the Rockies. That was a fantastic trip.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** Have you driven any stretches of Route 66?

**MOST:** I've been on it, but I don't think we drove a particularly long stretch.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** There's a section of road near Tijeras, New Mexico, where rumble strips set tires thrumming to the melody of "America the Beautiful." Have you heard of that?

Old Presque Isle Lighthouse © Dennis MacDonald.

**MOST TOUGH:** [Above] This year, Most starred as Prohibition-era crime boss Ray Bernstein in the period gangster film *Harsens Island Revenge*. The movie was shot on location in Michigan in and around Alpena and on Presque Isle [left] site of the 1840 Old Presque Isle Lighthouse—the oldest serving lighthouse on the Great Lakes.

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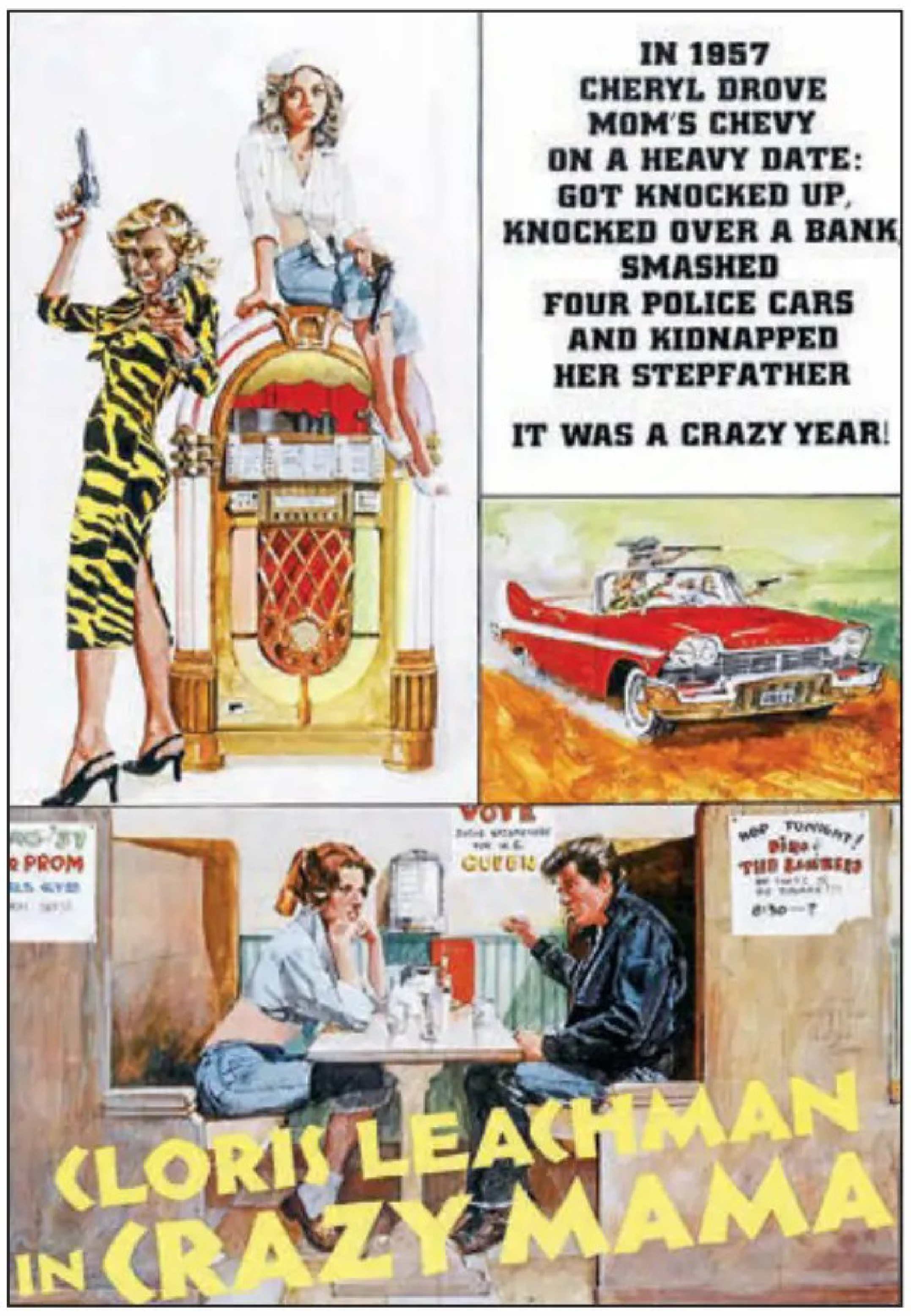
**MOST TRIPPY:** [Left and below] The road movie in Don Most's repertoire is *Crazy Mama*, a 1975, Cloris Leachman vehicle about a beauty salon operator who runs afoul of corrupt lawmakers and embarks upon a crime spree. [Above and left] Scenes were shot in and around the teepee-shaped cabins of the classic Wigwam Motel in San Bernardino, California.



**MOST:** You know, I think I have heard about that. It sounds pretty bizarre. But I haven't actually driven through it myself.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** Given your love for American popular standards, is "(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66" part of your repertoire?

**MOST:** Gosh, you know, I haven't performed that on stage. But I love Nat King Cole's version. And I've performed with a couple of female vocalists, who sang that at our show. It's a great song. I am going to have to do that.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** I was going to say—it's waiting for you.

**MOST:** Definitely. I'm glad you brought it up.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** So, last year marked fifty years since *Happy Days* debuted on January 15, 1974. You've done a few on-stage reunions with fellow cast members like Henry Winkler, Anson Williams, and Ron Howard. What kind of feelings does the show's fiftieth anniversary give you?

**MOST:** A lot of wonderful feelings. But also, it's sometimes a little bittersweet.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** Really?

**MOST:** Well, a little. Just like anything else, you look back and feel a sense of loss of these incredible times. But it's been great because in Pittsburgh [at Steel City Con], all four of the guys—Ron Howard, Henry Winkler, Anson Williams, and myself—we fell right into it. It was like no time had passed. And we'd stayed in touch. We have a text thread. We check in on each other regularly. Anson and I are as close as we ever were and speak to each other all the time. So it was just a wonderful reunion. People just loved seeing the four of us together.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** It seems like fans always hope that actors who appeared in a production together are still friends—even though the movie or TV show happened decades before. But I bet it's satisfying for *Happy Days* fans to find out that you guys really are still in touch. Do you know what I mean?

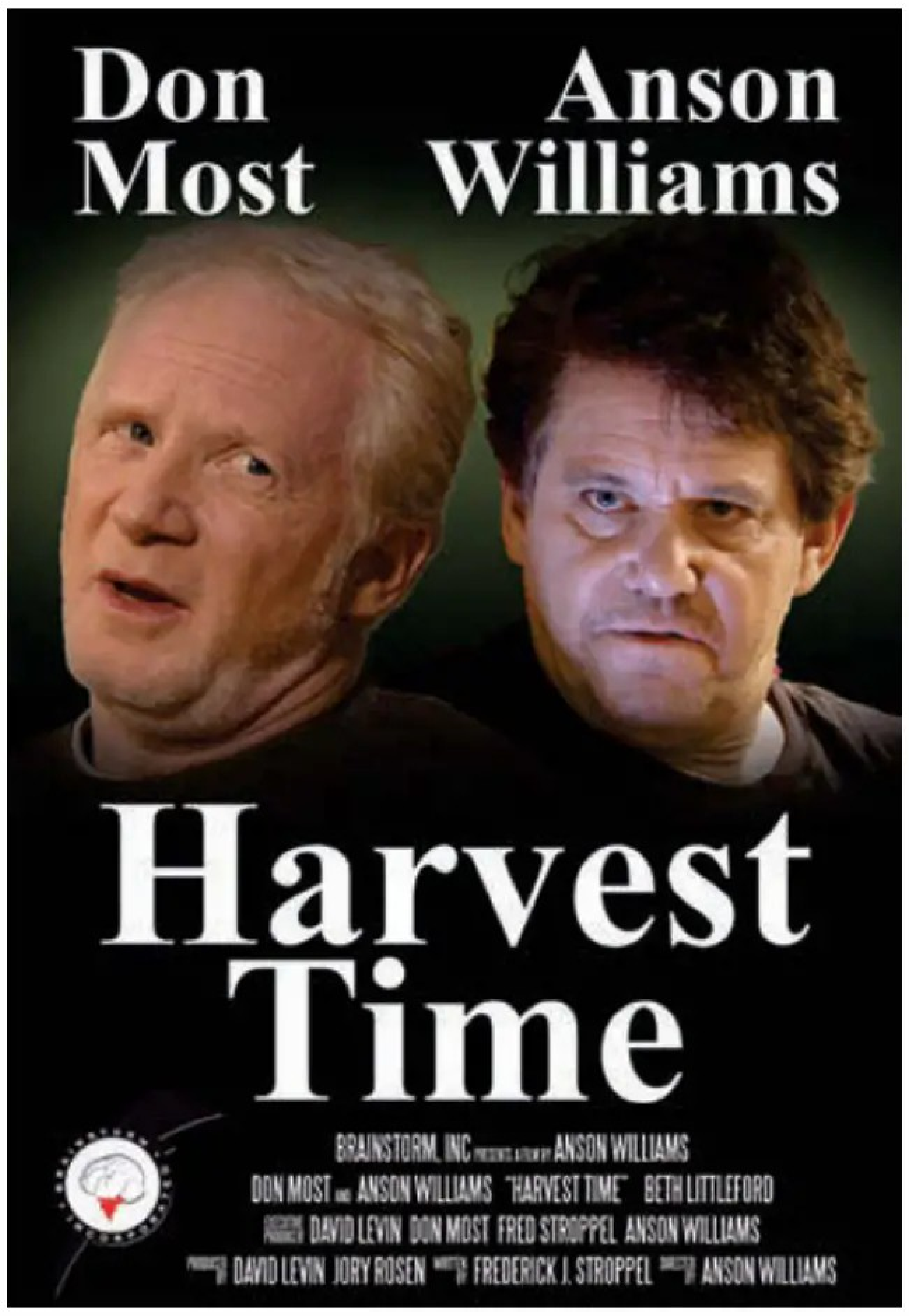
**MOST:** Yeah, they really love that. So many people would comment, "Oh, we're so glad to see that you're still friends and really were like a family." It kind of warms their hearts.

Wigwam Motel © Jessica Girvan. Wigwam Motel sign © Wayne Hsieh.

> "I haven't performed '(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66' on stage. But I love Nat King Cole's version. It's a great song. I am going to have to do that."

**AMERICAN ROAD:** I watched a video of Henry Winkler at one of these conventions, and he admitted to the audience that he—The Fonz himself—actually couldn't ride a motorcycle. It made me wonder about Ralph's 1929 Ford Highboy roadster pickup. Did you get to drive that thing?

**MOST:** Yes, I did. I loved it. It was so much fun to drive. I mainly drove it on the backlot of Paramount. That's where they built the exterior of Arnold's Drive-In. This was mainly in the first two seasons. We were shooting like a movie, not in front of an audience. So, in those first two years, I was driving that car in and out of the parking lot of Arnold's. And then even sometimes out on the road where we shot scenes in the neighborhood of Richie Cunningham's house, driving up to the house or whatever the episode called for. I got to drive it a good amount, and it was a lot of fun. But then after the third season on, we were shooting in front of an audience.


Don Most
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**AMERICAN ROAD:** That roadster popped up at an auction in 2019. I have no idea where it is now.

**MOST:** I do.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** Do you have it hidden in your garage?

**MOST:** Yeah, I wish. I was invited to a car show in Orlando, and Henry was there and Anson was there. Then we found out that the man who had bought the car was bringing the car to that show. So there it was, and it was great to see it after all those years. We took a lot of pictures with it.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** I've seen pictures of the dashboard with autographs on it—is yours one of them?

**MOST:** Yes. It was Henry, me, and Anson who signed it that day. Then the guys who run the car show wound up buying it. I believe it's still there in Florida.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** I want to stay with Arnold's Drive-In while we're talking about it. Garry Marshall based Arnold's on two greasy spoons he knew in Milwaukee—the Pig 'n' Whistle and the Milky Way. You grew up in Brooklyn and went to college in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania—did you have a favorite diner in those places?

**MOST:** There was one in Sheepshead Bay. I can't remember the name of it. That was great. And then there was a place called Junior's in downtown Brooklyn. Those are the ones that stick out. And then there was one actually not far from where I went to high school—Garfield's, it was called.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** I'm sitting in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, as I'm talking to you. How far am I from your old neighborhood?

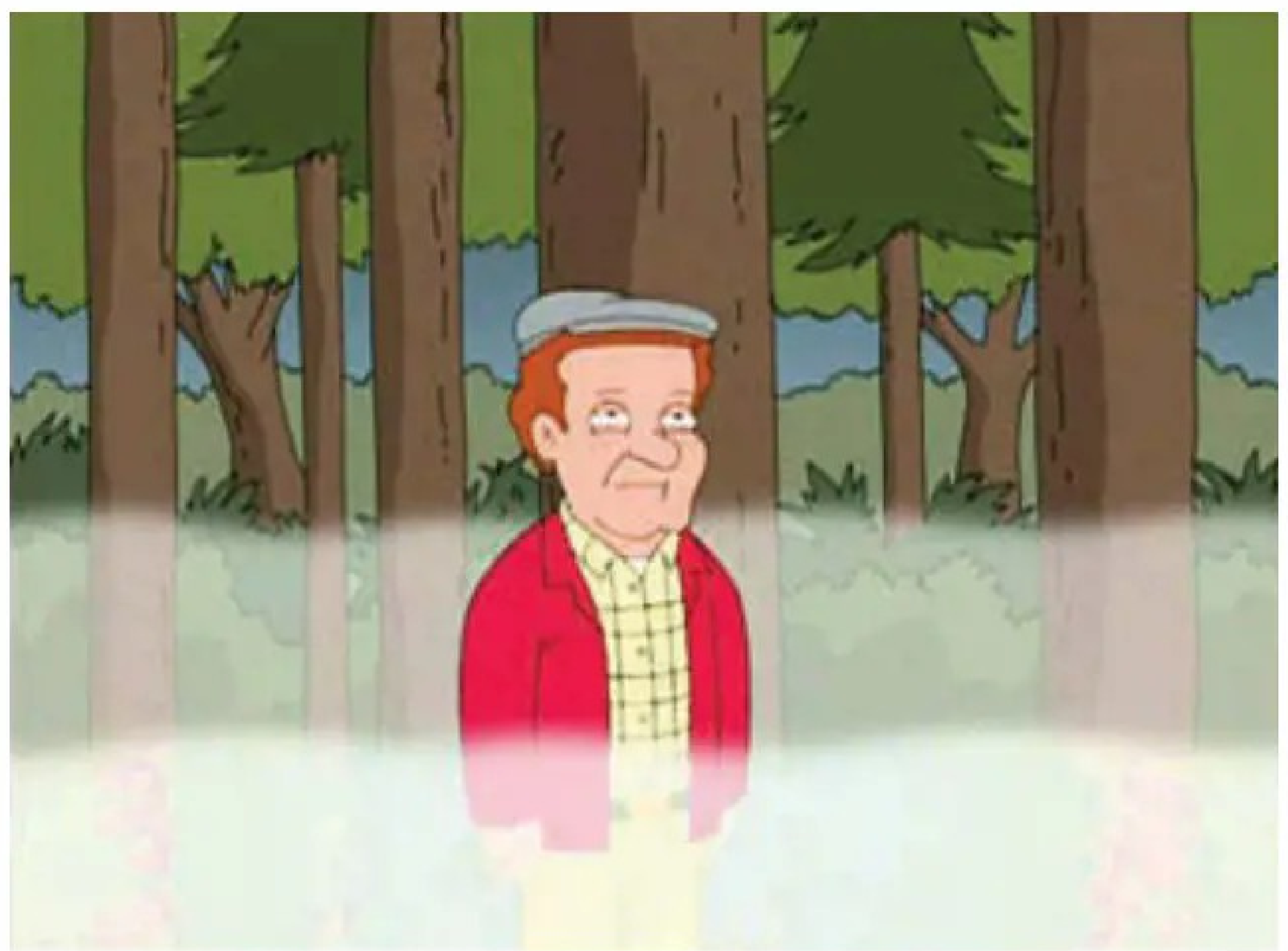
**MOST:** I was in Flatbush—not that far. So, you probably would know about that [Sheepshead Bay] restaurant. I wish I could remember the name.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** Well, the legendary restaurant of Sheepshead Bay was Lundy's—that huge seafood house famous for its shore dinner and huckleberry pie. Is that what you're thinking of?

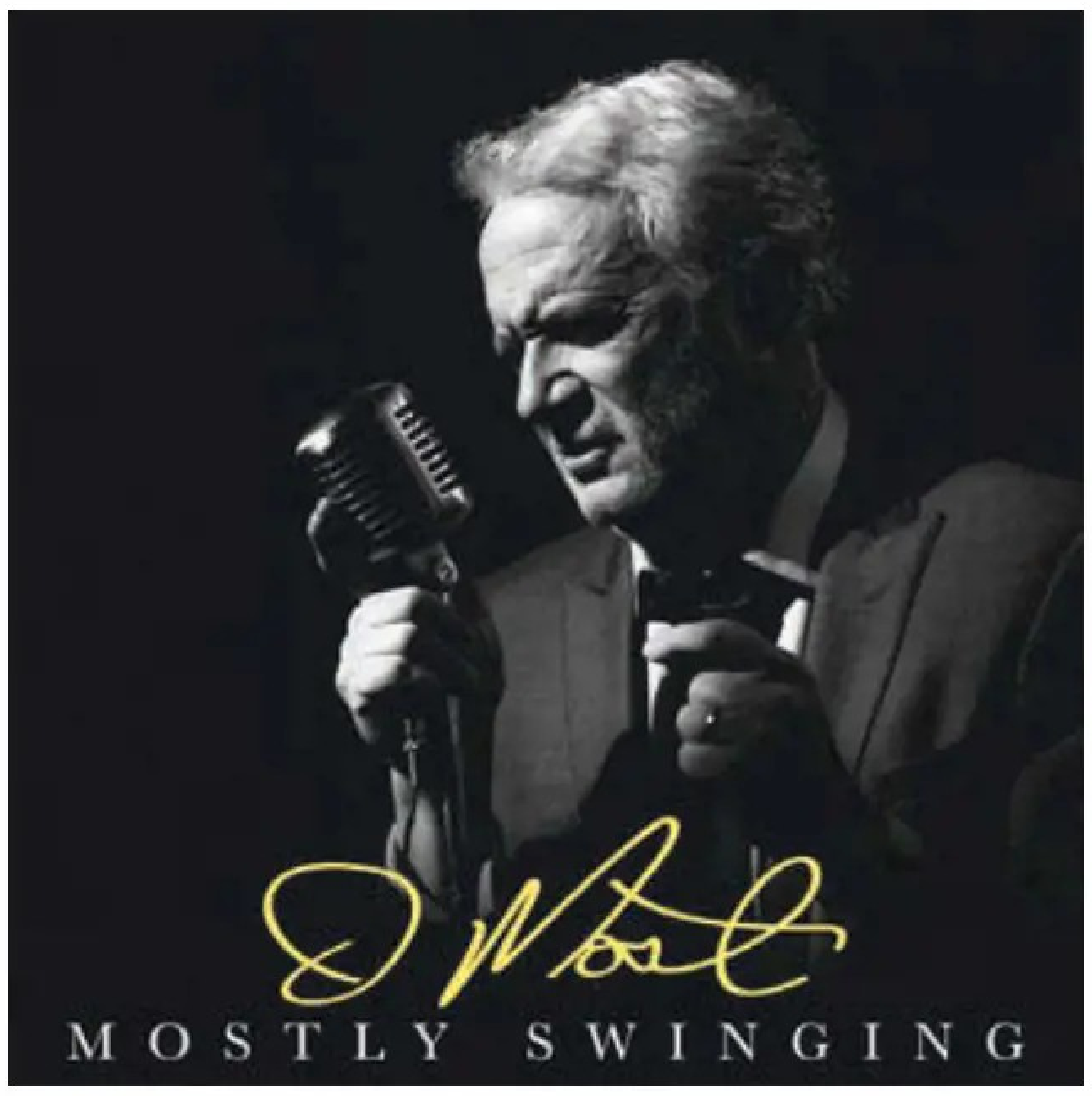
**MOST:** I think so, yeah. It's not really a diner, though.

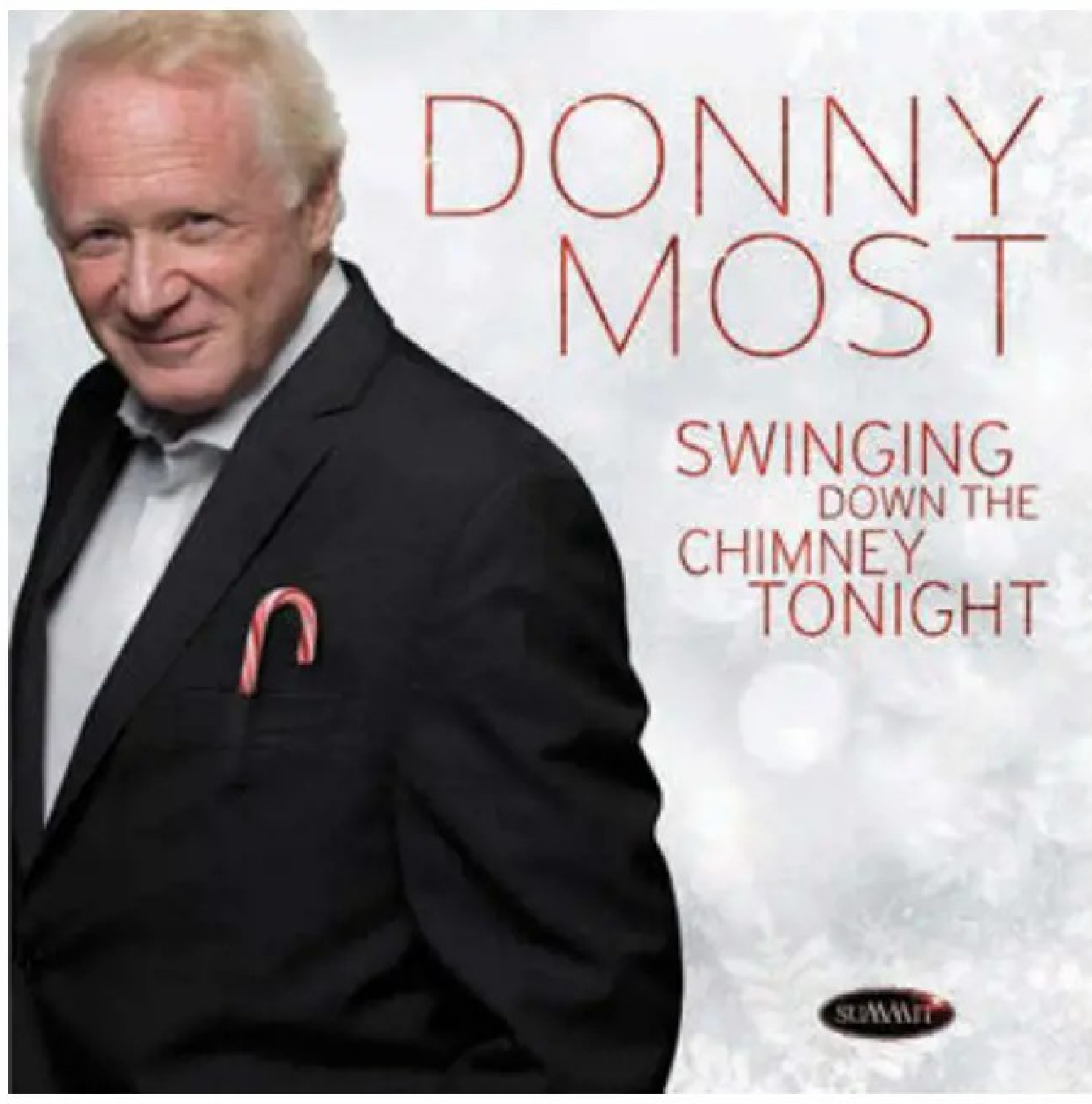
Anson Williams and Don Most 2022 photo © AFF.

**MOST BROTHERLY:** [Left and above] During the COVID-19 pandemic, Most reteamed with Anson Williams to film *Harvest Time*—a dark comedy about two brothers negotiating the terms of a kidney transplant. The short movie, written by playwright Frederick Stroppel, marked the first time since finishing *Happy Days* that the real-life best friends had appeared together in a scripted program.



**MOST MUSIC:** [Above] Don Most gave voice to a cartoon version of himself during a *Brigadoon*-style musical number that aired in 2007 on the animated TV show *Family Guy*. He actually began his own singing career at age 14 before he turned to acting. His most recent album, *New York High*, has critics calling him "the new Sinatra." [Opposite] Most performs regularly at jazz clubs in Colorado.




DONNY MOST
SWINGING DOWN THE CHIMNEY TONIGHT
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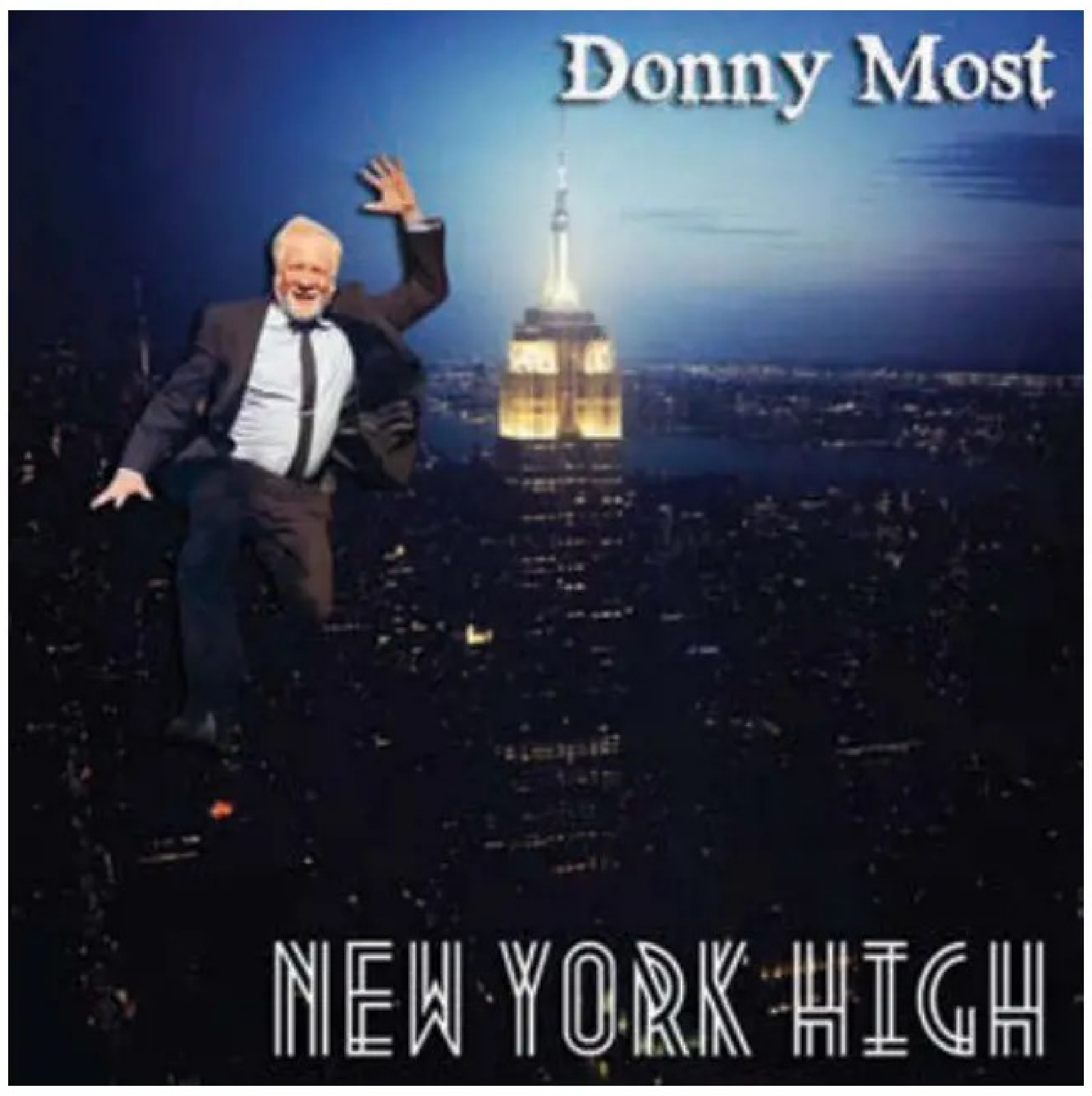


**AMERICAN ROAD:** No, but we can bend the rules a little. So, your *Happy Days* pals Ralph and Richie were always trying to get girls up to Inspiration Point, which I think was basically a make-out spot. Now, I'm not going to ask you about making out, but I do wonder if there's a place that gives you inspiration—anywhere near your home, or anywhere at all.

**MOST:** Well, when I used to live in Southern California, there were certain beautiful beaches for me to really relax and get into. There are a lot of beautiful places in nature, now that I'm in Colorado. It's such beautiful country here.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** Colorado is easily among the most beautiful states in the country.

**MOST:** It is. And there's so much I haven't seen. I need to take some drives.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** I was going to say, it's time to get in the car. By the way, what's your daily driver, sir? Do you have something exotic in the garage or do you prefer a sensible set of wheels?

**MOST:** It's pretty sensible. It's a Ford Fusion hybrid plug-in. It's got two engines. The electric's not one of the ones you can drive 300 miles on, but you can go 25 miles on it. So, I'm driving locally every day. I come back and charge it, and I could go a month without using any gas. And if I'm on a longer trip and it runs out of electric, it switches over.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** You're on the road for your music these days, playing some gigs around the country.

**MOST:** I had one in Florida at the Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort & Spa—a fundraiser for essential tremor—on May 3, and one in Ventura, California, on May 9, associated with the Ventura Music Festival.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** And you're usually accompanied by a big band, too, I think.

**MOST:** I performed at a jazz club in Denver called Dazzle with a big band called the Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra—a seventeen-piece band. It was great.

**AMERICAN ROAD:** If our readers want to see you, where should they go?

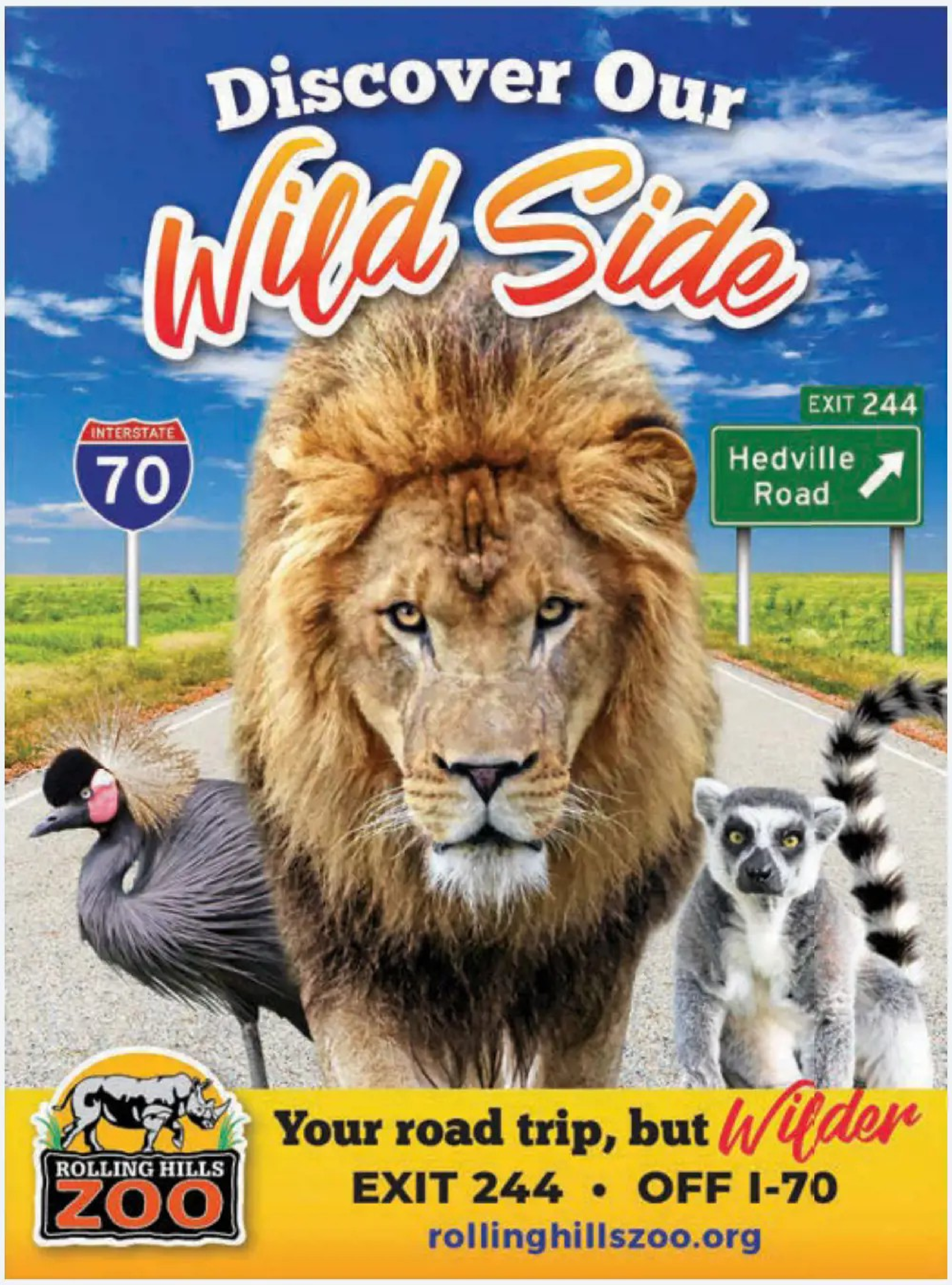
**MOST:** I'm going to start putting it up on my website a little bit more, which is www.RealDonnyMost.com and on Facebook [www.facebook.com/DonMostMusic].

**AMERICAN ROAD:** Don, you've been very generous with your time, and we appreciate it.

**MOST:** My pleasure. It's been nice talking with you.

Interviewer **ROBERT KLARA** is a New York City-based author and a Senior Editor at **AMERICAN ROAD**.

Closing photo courtesy Don Most.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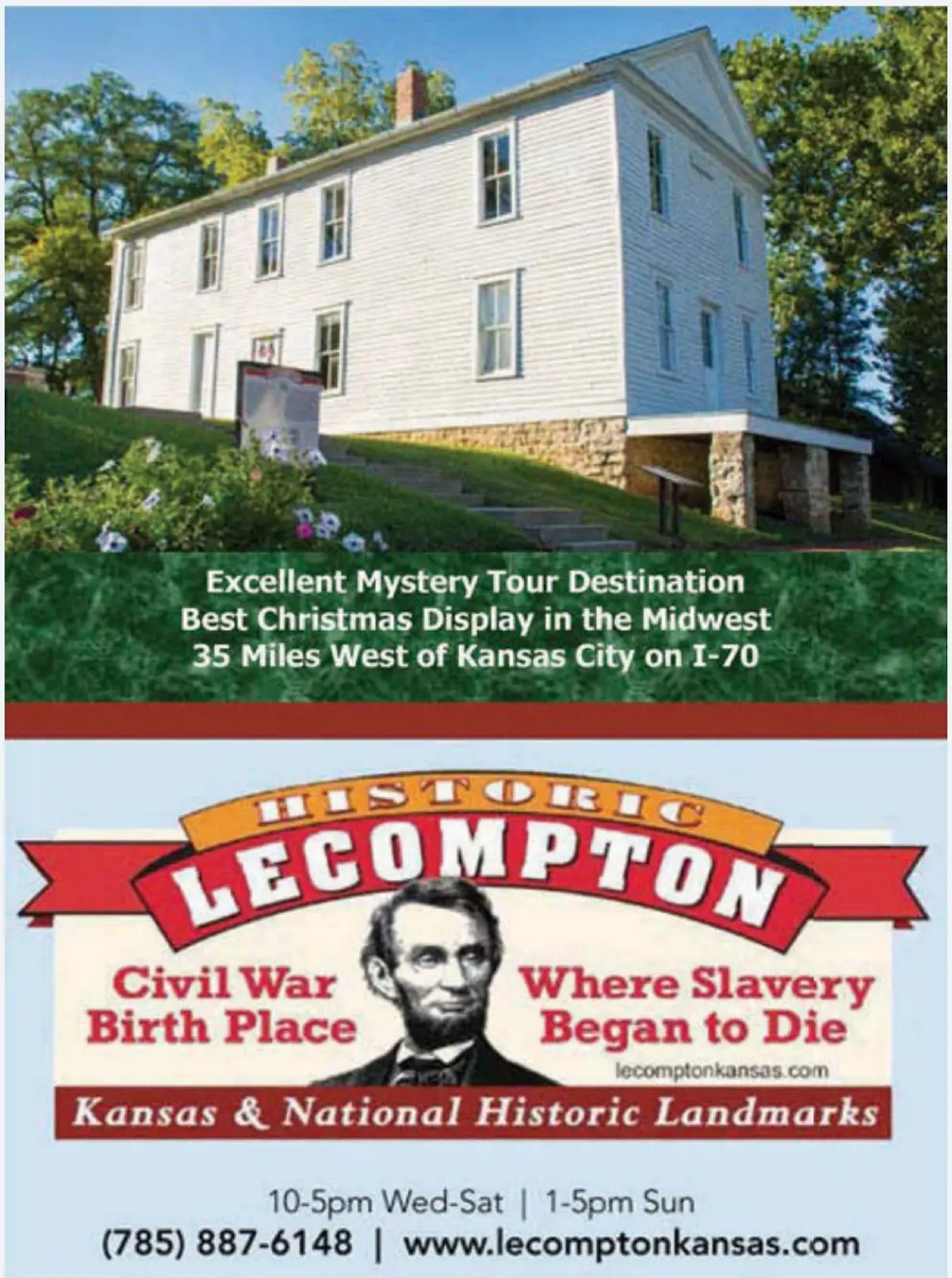
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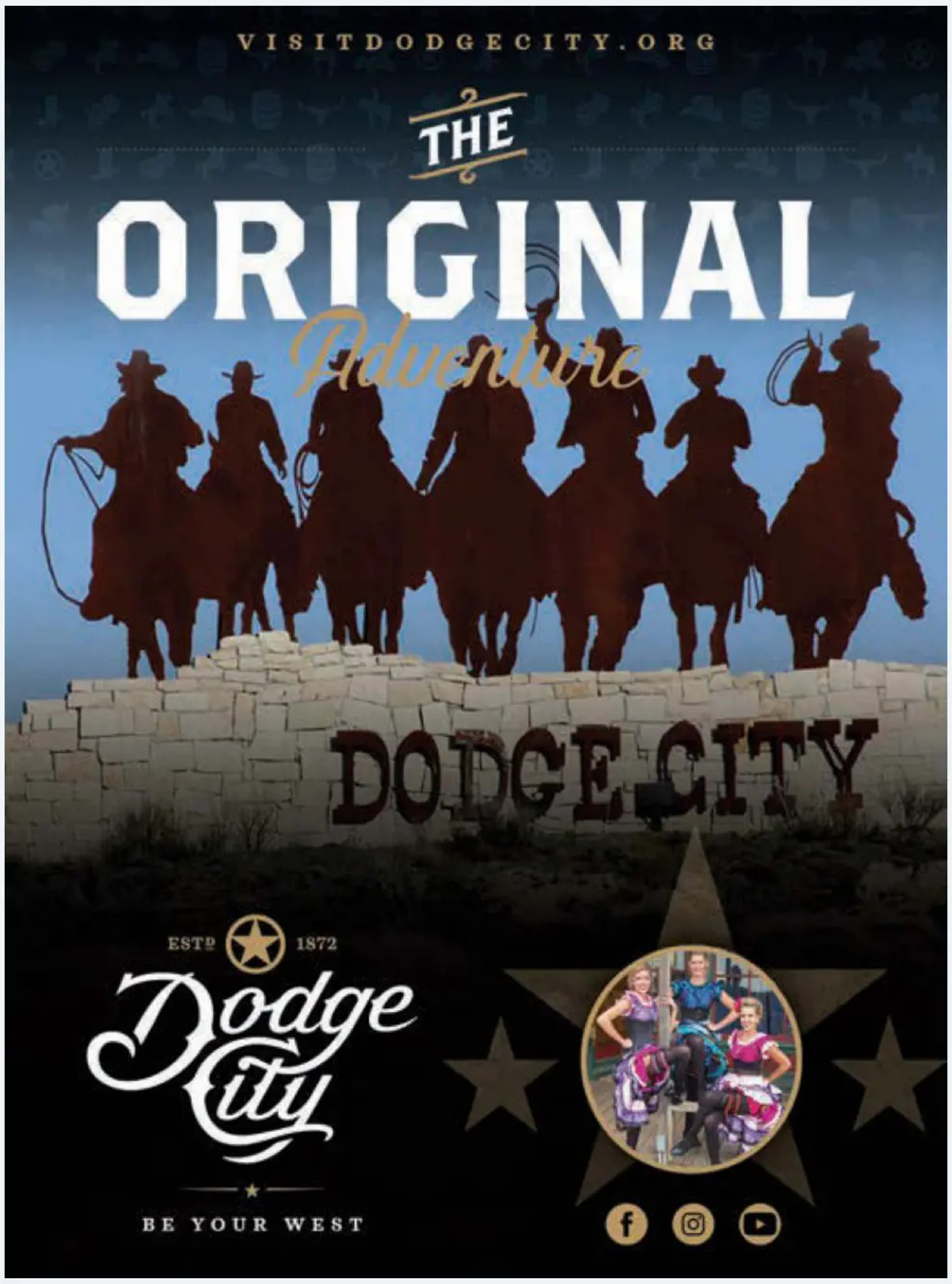
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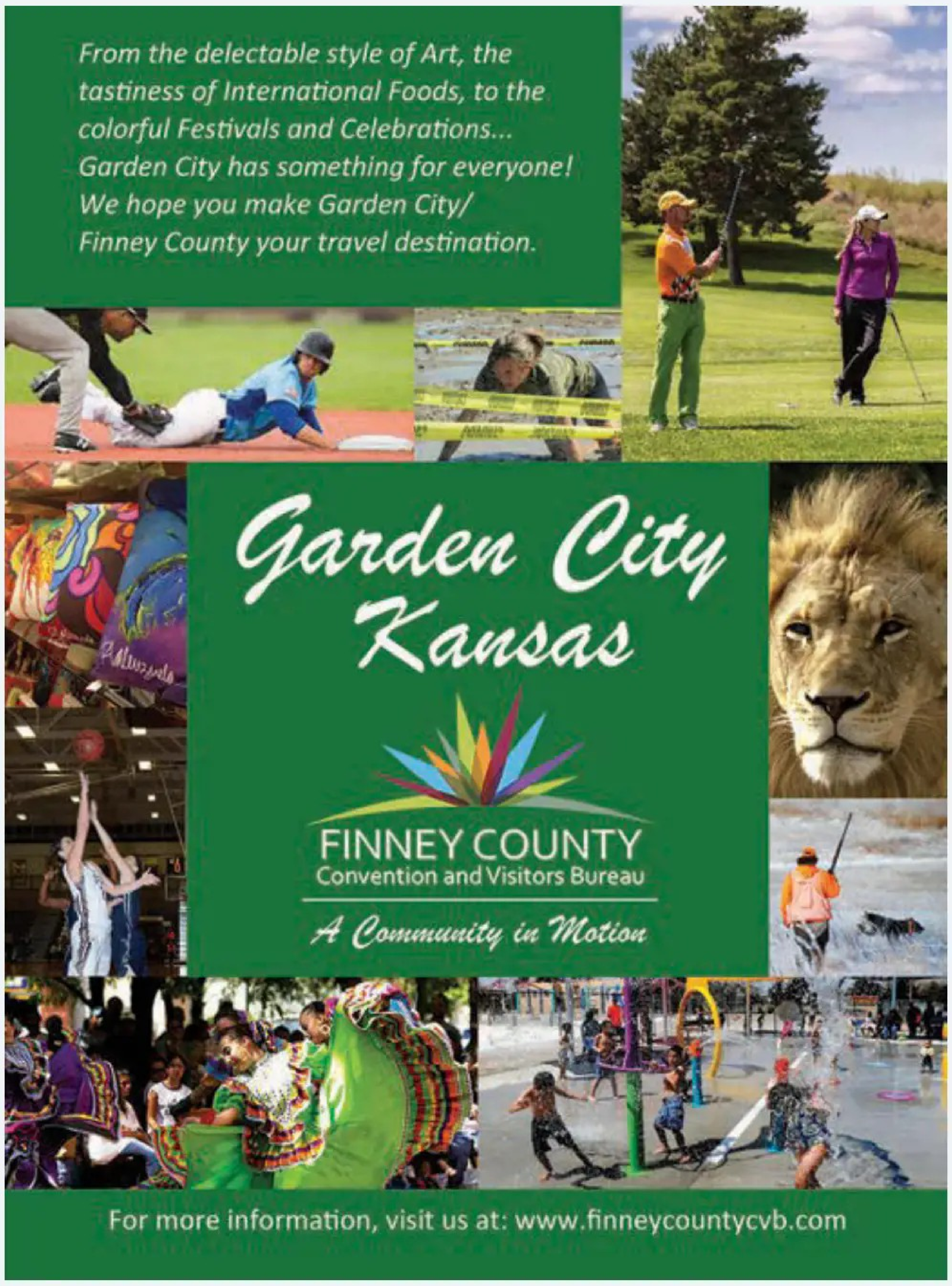
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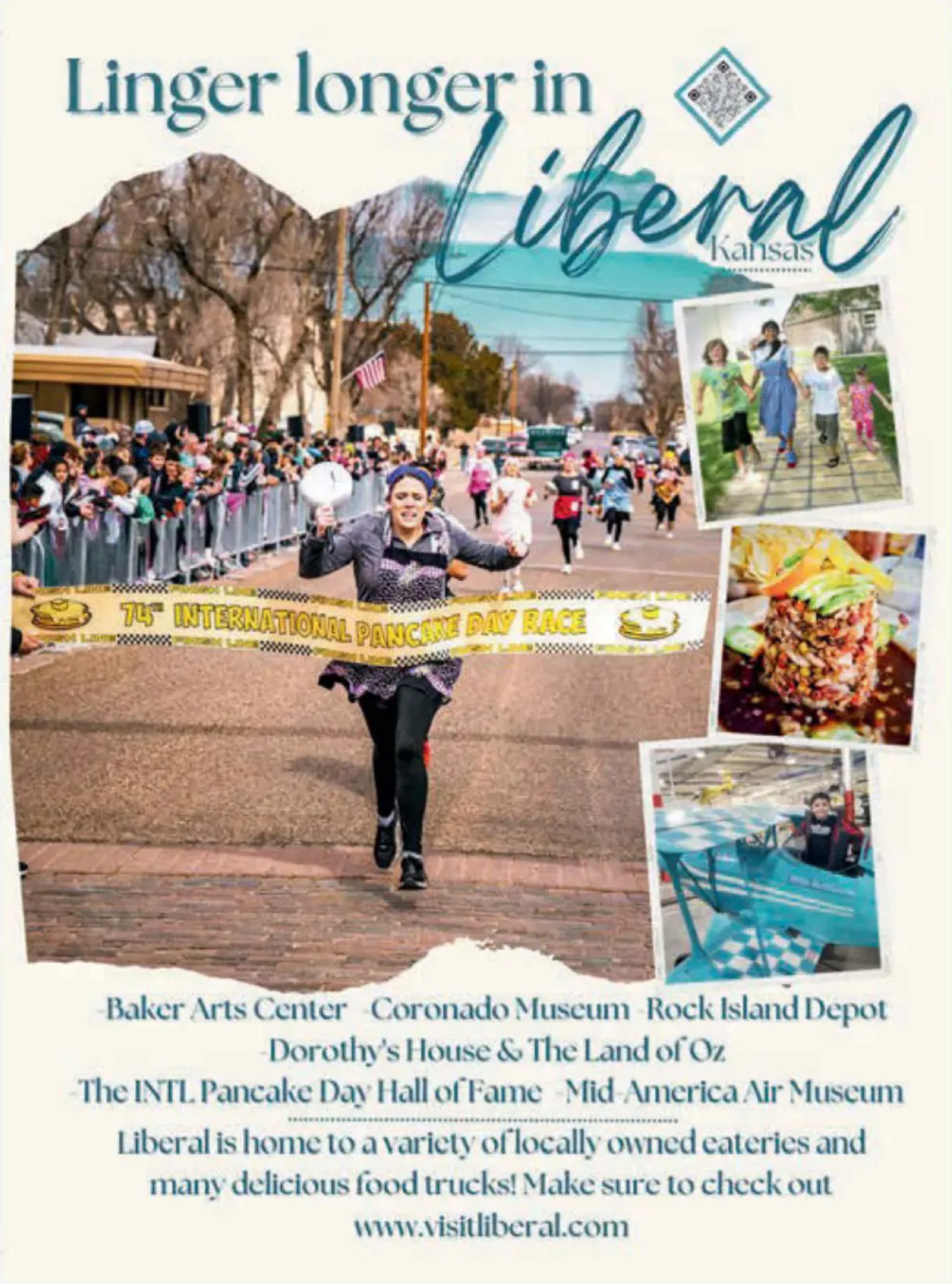
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# Blueberry Hill
## St. Louis, Missouri

In 1972, when Joe Edwards looked around the St. Louis neighborhood where he and his wife Linda were opening a restaurant and nightclub, the scene was not promising. The once-vital area was a picture of urban decay. Retail stores that had once been regular destinations for streetcar riders were closed and vacant. The streetcars themselves were merely a memory.

The Delmar Loop was nearly down and out—nobody was singing about it. But that was about to change, courtesy of one vintage Seeburg jukebox and a collection of thirty thousand 45 RPM records.

The massive assemblage of vinyl discs—and the venerable Seeburg player—were Edwards' pride and joy. He was a connoisseur of music memorabilia who had collected his platters with a discerning ear. When he opened his new nightspot—offering his first customers little more in food and drink than a hot dog machine, beer nuts, and a selection of quality brews—he wisely decided to make music its focus. He fired up his reliable Seeburg and began rotating classic records in and out of it, enthusiastically sharing his favorite tunes with everyone who danced through the door.

The new nightspot was given a great name to get people into the groove: Edwards called it Blueberry Hill.

"The lilting Fats Domino lyrics popped into my mind thirty seconds after I decided to open this place," Edwards says. "I quickly thought there must be another song that would be better. But after playing around fifteen thousand songs over several months, I realized, 'No, no—there's nothing better.' So, Blueberry Hill it remained. You still hear the song on television, of course, in reruns of *Happy Days*. On that show, "Blueberry Hill" is Richie Cunningham's favorite, so those reruns keep introducing the song to new generations."

Happy days have since found the Delmar Loop, too. Today, the formerly run-down Mound City neighborhood is revitalized. It has become a pop culture mecca that attracts visitors from around the globe. At its center stands Edwards' old Seeburg, still capable of rocking hot wax: Indeed, the jukebox that started it all has been named #1 Jukebox in the United States by *Billboard* and *Esquire* and #1 in the World by the BBC.

Visitors to Blueberry Hill now find a deeper, All-American menu that specializes in burgers, wings, and desserts galore. (There's even an old-fashioned chicken noodle soup that keeps customers crowing.) Guests are served in a number of themed rooms inside an expansive venue filled with hundreds of display cases. Behind the glass are exhibited thousands of nostalgia items—everything from vintage Pez dispensers, *Howdy Doody* merchandise, metal lunch boxes, and *Star Wars* artifacts. There are rare porcelain figures of the Beatles and concert posters from Woodstock. Blueberry Hill also contains the world's largest collection of Chuck Berry memorabilia—mainly because the late Prime Minister of Rock and Roll came to love the place.

Berry—a native St. Louisan—lived in Ladue and Wentzville, Missouri, in his later years. He became friends with Edwards in the 1980s.

**BERRY FILLING:** Big treats on the menu at Blueberry Hill include the restaurant's famous seven-ounce hamburger, available in a breakfast variety that's topped with a fried egg and Canadian bacon. Of course, blueberry pie tops the dessert menu, served with or without ice cream.

Blueberry Hill
ON SIDEWALKS

Blueberry Hill • 6504 Delmar Boulevard • University City, Missouri 63130 • (314) 727-4444 • blueberryhill.com

BY **STACY BOSCO**

In 1985, Edwards opened a space for live shows at Blueberry Hill, and Berry decided to perform there. "One night…when reminiscing about the early days of his career, Chuck mentioned to me that he'd like to play a place the size of the clubs he played when he first started out," Edwards recalls. "I said, 'Let's do it at Blueberry Hill!'"

The marriage between the musical legend and the intimate space was electric: Berry inaugurated Blueberry Hill's 340-seat Duck Room in 1997 and continued to appear there once a month for twenty-one years. His performances were alternately raw and glorious but always wonderfully personal. He brought such fame to the venue that a statue of him was installed across the street. It depicts him performing his signature "duck walk"—the stage shuffle that gave the Duck Room its name.

Since seeing success with Blueberry Hill, Edwards has continued to contribute to the Delmar Loop. The Moonrise Hotel and Eclipse Restaurant are among his ventures. He is credited with spearheading the Loop Trolley system and renovating the nearby Flamingo Bowl. His latest venture is Magic Mini Golf—a restaurant and bar with an indoor, eighteen-hole green paired with a five-seat indoor Ferris wheel that can be enjoyed no matter the weather.

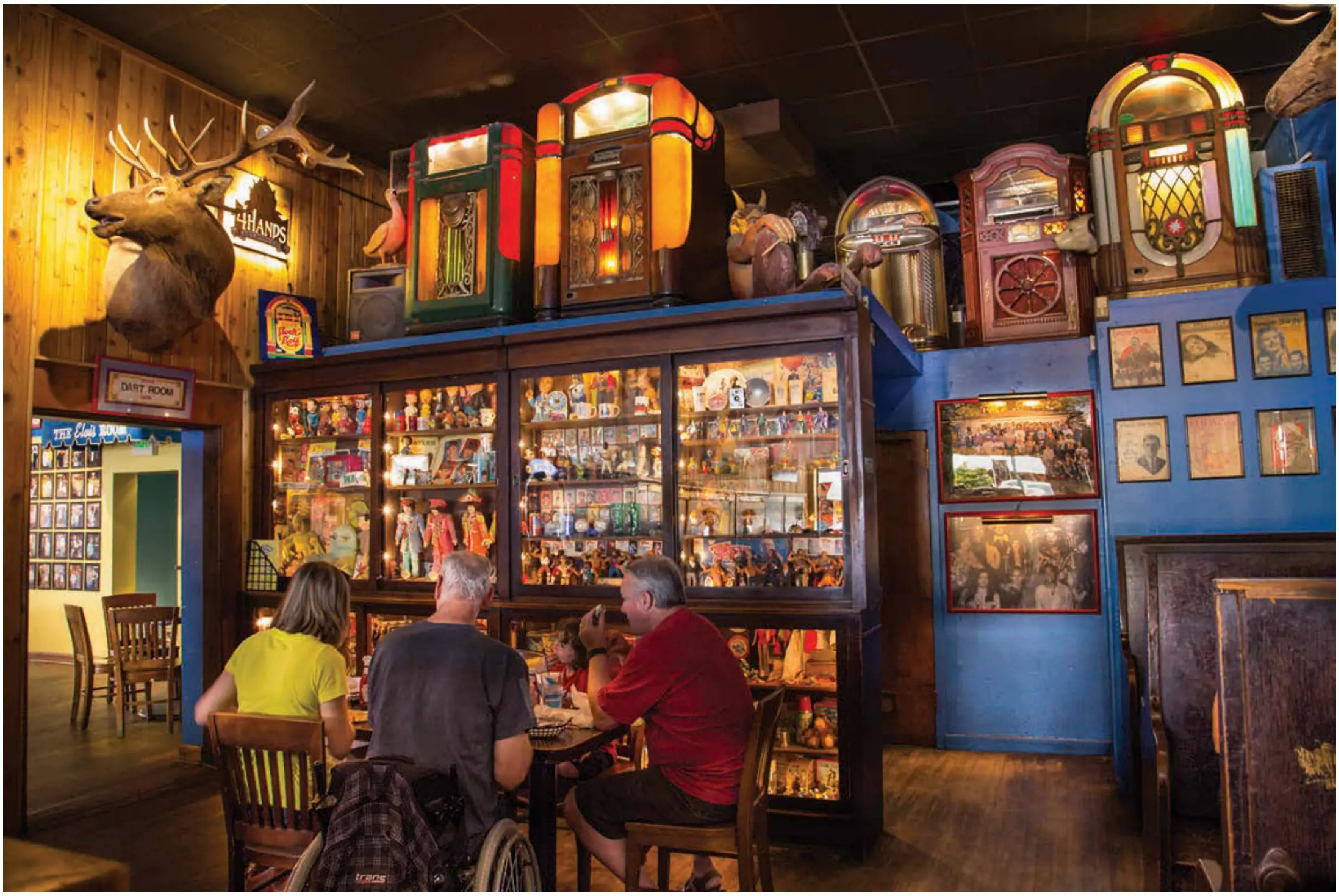
"I just want to keep fine-tuning what I have," he says. And that much is verifiably true. At Blueberry Hill, the jukes are still playing Fats Domino, and the song and the times are still a thrill.

---

**STACY BOSCO** is a California-based writer and a Roadside Contributor at AMERICAN ROAD.

I found my thrill...
Blueberry Hill

**FIND YOUR THRILL:** [Above and below] Opened in 1972, Blueberry Hill has hundreds of display cases filled with pop-culture memorabilia. Favorite collections showcase everything from *Howdy Doody* to Pez dispensers—and the largest exhibit of Chuck Berry artifacts in the world.



Blueberry Hill exterior © travelpix. Additional images courtesy Blueberry Hill.

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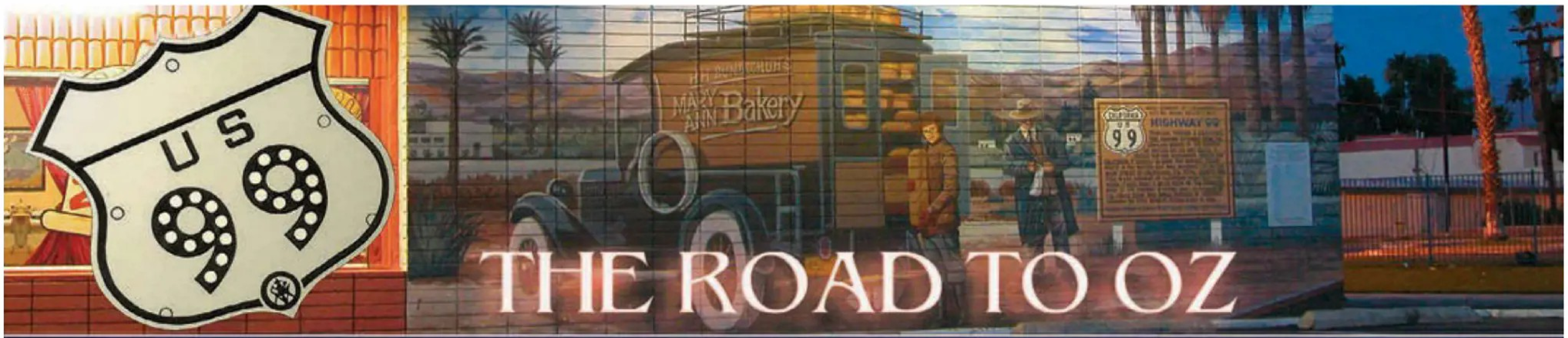


# THE ROAD TO OZ

EASING ALONG CALIFORNIA'S MAIN STREET TO WASHINGTON'S EMERALD CITY

• BY ANDERSEN EMENDING

## "The Cunningham DeSoto"

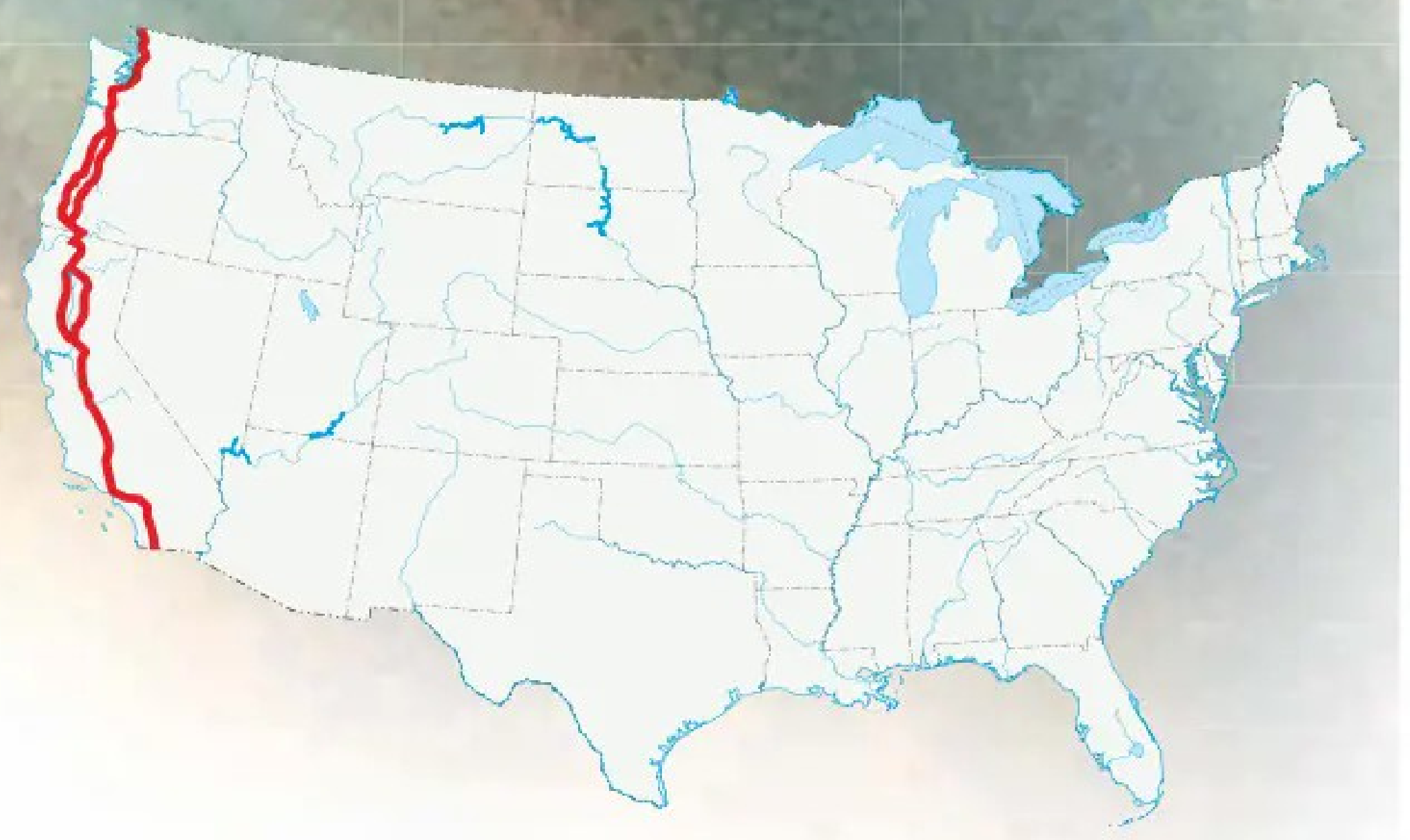
Howard Cunningham, patriarch of the *Happy Days* television sitcom, was a family man through and through. An Army cook and later the owner of a department store with his wife, Marion, the father of three was a sturdy and dependable provider for his family.

He needed a car to match.

Enter the 1948 DeSoto Suburban, a reliable three-row station wagon that was Mr. C's pride and joy. Viewers will remember its many scenes with the Cunningham clan.

Today, the car—still in good shape, despite remaining unrestored for nostalgic reasons—is part of the LeMay Collections at Marymount, recognized by the Guinness World Records in the 1990s as the largest privately held automobile collection in the world. Once serving as the Marymount Military Academy, the grounds of the school in Parkland, Washington, were repurposed by automobile collector and sanitation magnate Harold LeMay and his wife, Nancy, in 1991. Autos on display include everything from a 1931 Stutz Boattail Speedster to a 1969 Ford Mustang Mach 1, muscle cars of the 1970s, to whimsical one-offs such as the SeaWorld Manta Ray.

Howard's DeSoto fits right in. With its beefy front grille, chrome-and-wood roof rack and gleaming flying goddess hood ornament, the 1948 was a head turner, even if it wasn't the top performer of its day. The well-made inline six, at 236.6 cubic inches, offered just 109 horsepower (though Fonzie did soup it up in season two so it could win a drag race). Its 139.5-inch wheelbase was more than five inches longer than the 2024 Chevrolet Suburban's, and it could fit nine passengers with ease thanks to a third row that was foldable for extra storage. While more than one DeSoto was used during filming of the show, the LeMay DeSoto was definitely one of them. Many museum visitors recognize it right away.



**US HIGHWAY 99** traveled from Blaine, Washington, at the US-Canada border, to Calexico, California, at the US-Mexico border. The route was decommissioned in the 1960s.

"The quiet eloquence with which they speak of it is interesting," says Tono Sablan, executive director of the LeMay Family Collection Foundation. "They talk about it almost like it's an old family member."

At least for the Cunninghams, it really was part of the family.

In the LeMay museum, a hand-lettered sign helps explain the car's provenance for the uninitiated: "If you saw Richie grow up, join the Army and get married or saw Joanie fall in love with Chachi, then you've seen this very car take the Cunninghams on many family outings."

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The car played a prominent role in the show not only as a family ferry, but also as a foil for fleshing out Howard's character. His fatherly and loyal demeanor was often expressed in his deep affection for the DeSoto—though sometimes that got him into trouble. During season seven, Marion forgets to set the parking brake on the DeSoto, which subsequently rolls down a hill and crashes through a wall into Arnold's diner. Nearly in tears, Howard caresses the car and exclaims, "My poor DeSoto, my poor baby." Turning to Al Delvecchio, the diner's owner, Richie quips, "You know, he raised that car."

Howard later scolds his wife as irresponsible. But the sturdy DeSoto is subsequently repaired, and so is the Cunninghams' marriage: "I don't care about the DeSoto," Howard says after paying a fine to keep Marion out of jail. "I just care about you."

While the 1948 Suburban was minimally altered from DeSoto's prewar models, the large but gracefully sculpted car showed evidence of the brand's forward-thinking heritage. In 1934, DeSoto and its parent company Chrysler had introduced the groundbreaking Airflow, winner in consecutive years of the Grand Prix d'Honneur for aerodynamic styling at the Monte Carlo Concours d'Elegance.

By the late 1940s, DeSoto had refined the style into a reliable family car emblematic of the burgeoning suburban life at the time. "Perfect for big families," boasted a 1950 ad that shows nine happy people in the spacious interior.

The car's decidedly family-oriented styling was a recurring trope in *Happy Days*. In episode two, Richie and Potsie think the DeSoto isn't flashy enough to convince any girls to go to the sock hop with them. ("It's his folks' car," Potsie tells a chuckling Fonzie.) The best friends hatch a plan to spend $175 to buy a beat-up white convertible that works like a charm—until it doesn't. When the jalopy won't start while the boys are chilling with their dates by the lake, up drives Howard in his uncool (but reliable) DeSoto to save the day.

If you head to Marymount to see the *Happy Days* DeSoto, be sure to add the green building to your tour.

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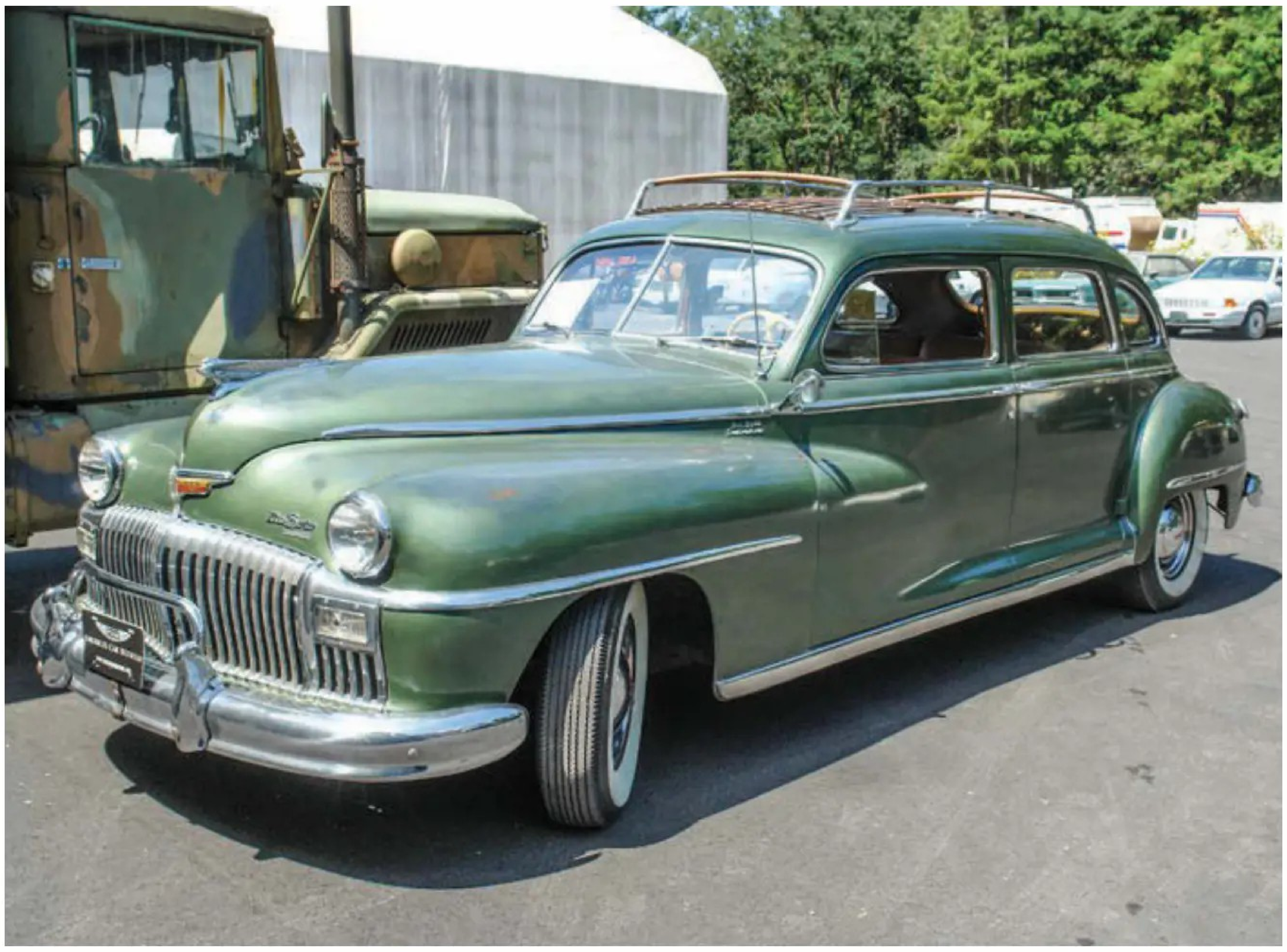
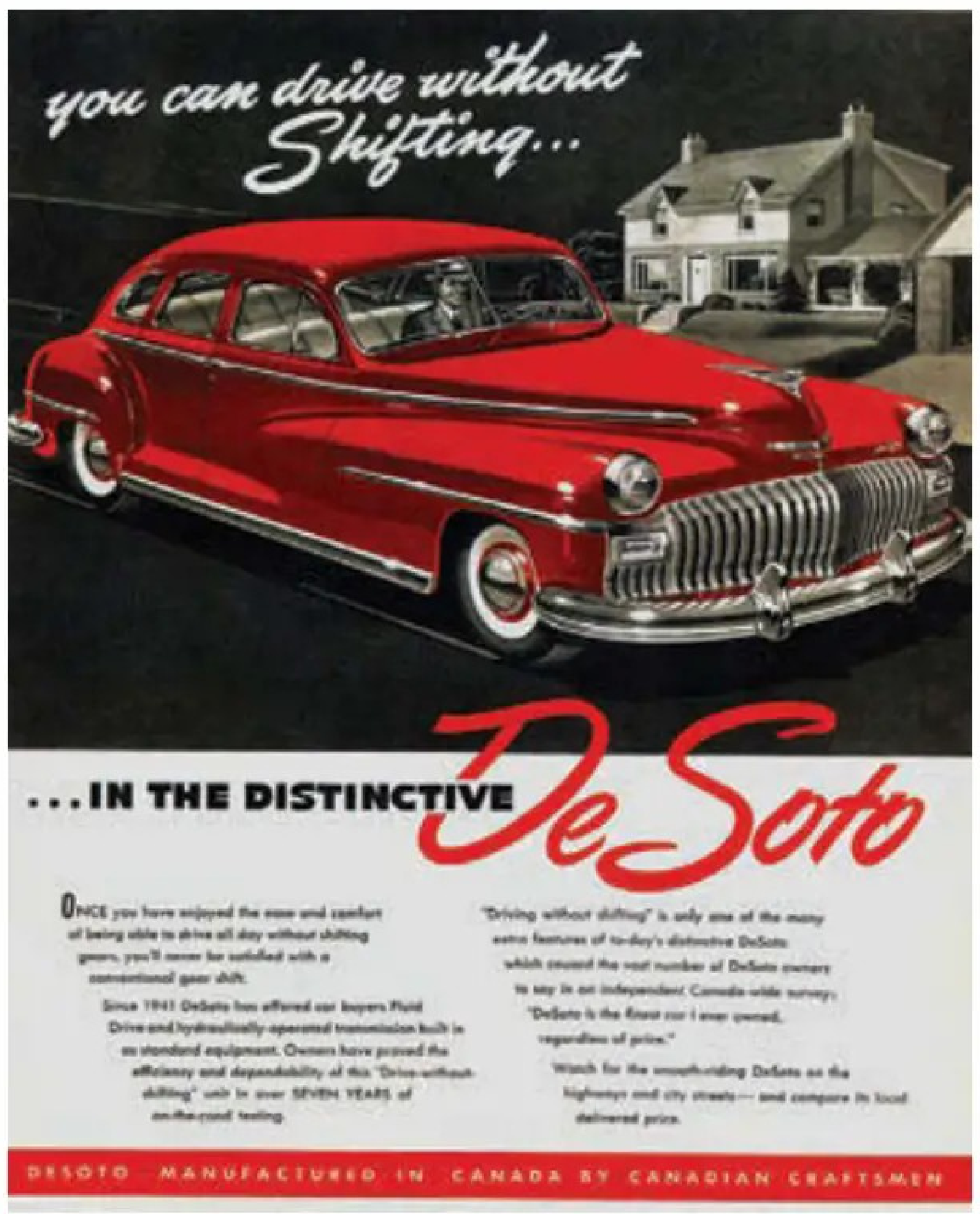
**ANDERSEN EMENDING** is an Oregon-based writer and a Roadside Contributor at AMERICAN ROAD.




you can drive without Shifting...
...IN THE DISTINCTIVE DeSoto
DESOTO MANUFACTURED IN CANADA BY CANADIAN CRAFTSMEN

**THE CUNNINGHAM SEDAN:** [Above] The Cunningham family's 1948 DeSoto Suburban as it appears today and [below] as it looked in *Happy Days*. The Suburban was advertised as "perfect for big families" because it could carry nine adults and came with a roof luggage rack standard.

Modern images courtesy LeMay Family Collection.

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**Advertorial**

Travel is attracting a new legion of side-giggers as people discover their friends, family and acquaintances have the desire of traveling together as a group. "This is good news for those who love to travel and know others ready to enjoy traveling together" says Charlie Presley of the Group Travel Family of Brands. GTFofBrands is an organization serving 25,000 volunteer travel-giggers with education and networking, helping them succeed in leading friends and family on trips. "Its rewarding to see people evolve their love of travel into a side-gig that serves people as well as the rewards of free travel" adds Presley "I became involved with a group of women who love to travel and the planner in me kind of took over and started thinking about leisure trips" says Jerri LaHaie. Jerri went on to say. "It's been surprising how easily my skills have transferred to this and I'm finding it to be a lot of fun."

There is pent up desire for travel and you will find that your friends and family are just waiting for someone to plan the trip for them. If that is the case, you need to explore the travel-gig opportunity.

As a reader of this publication, you already know of great destinations, so why not give it a try? Its easy to get started and GTFofBrands will give you the tools and networking to start your new travel-gig career. GTFofBrands offers conferences, publications, and on-line tips with no membership fee. The organization features seven conferences to learn how to be a travel leader, these gatherings are held at destinations of interest like Green Bay, Branson, Zion National Park, Buffalo/Niagara, and Chesapeake Virginia to name a few.
You have the choice of attending the conference that best serves you including, Select Traveler Conference for International travel, Going On Faith for faith based travel, The African American Travel Conference, and Boomers in Groups serving the mature and boomer market. "If you like travel, and the satisfaction that comes from creating an experience that people will remember forever, you're in the right place" added Ms LaHaie.

If you are interested in starting a travel-gig or to learn more about attending the above conferences, we invite you to visit grouptravelfamily.com or call 800-628-0993.

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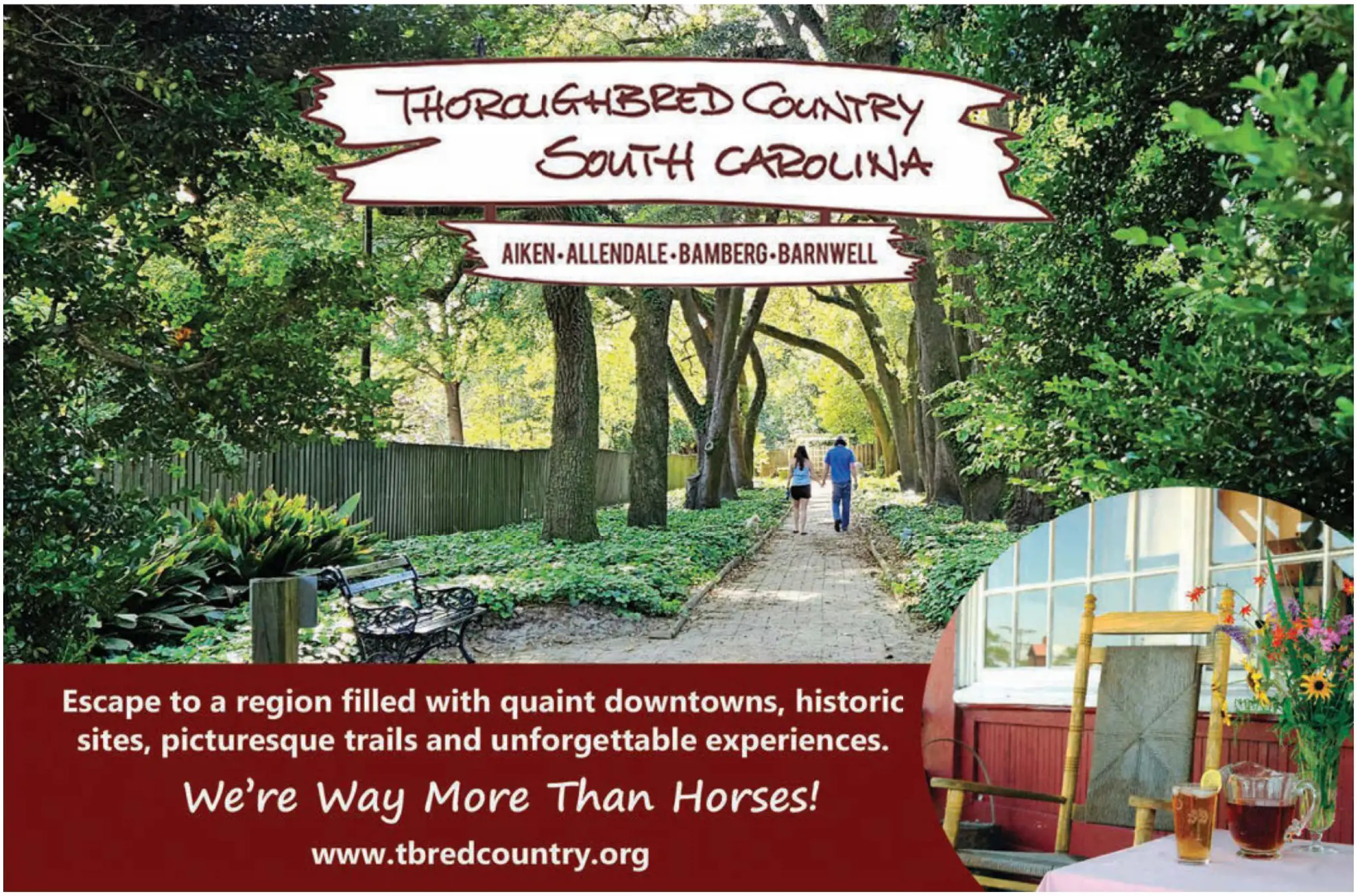

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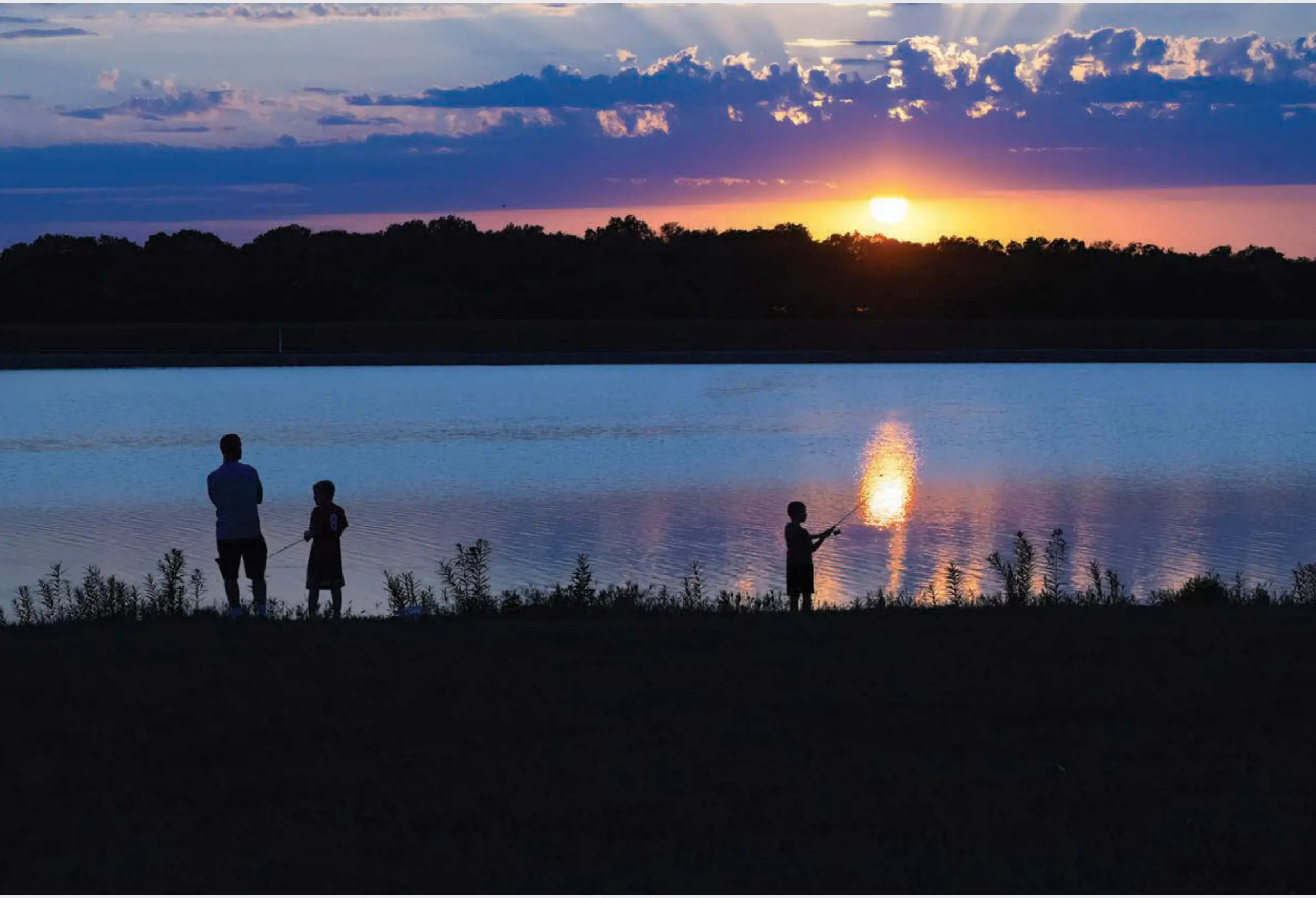
# HAPPY DAYS

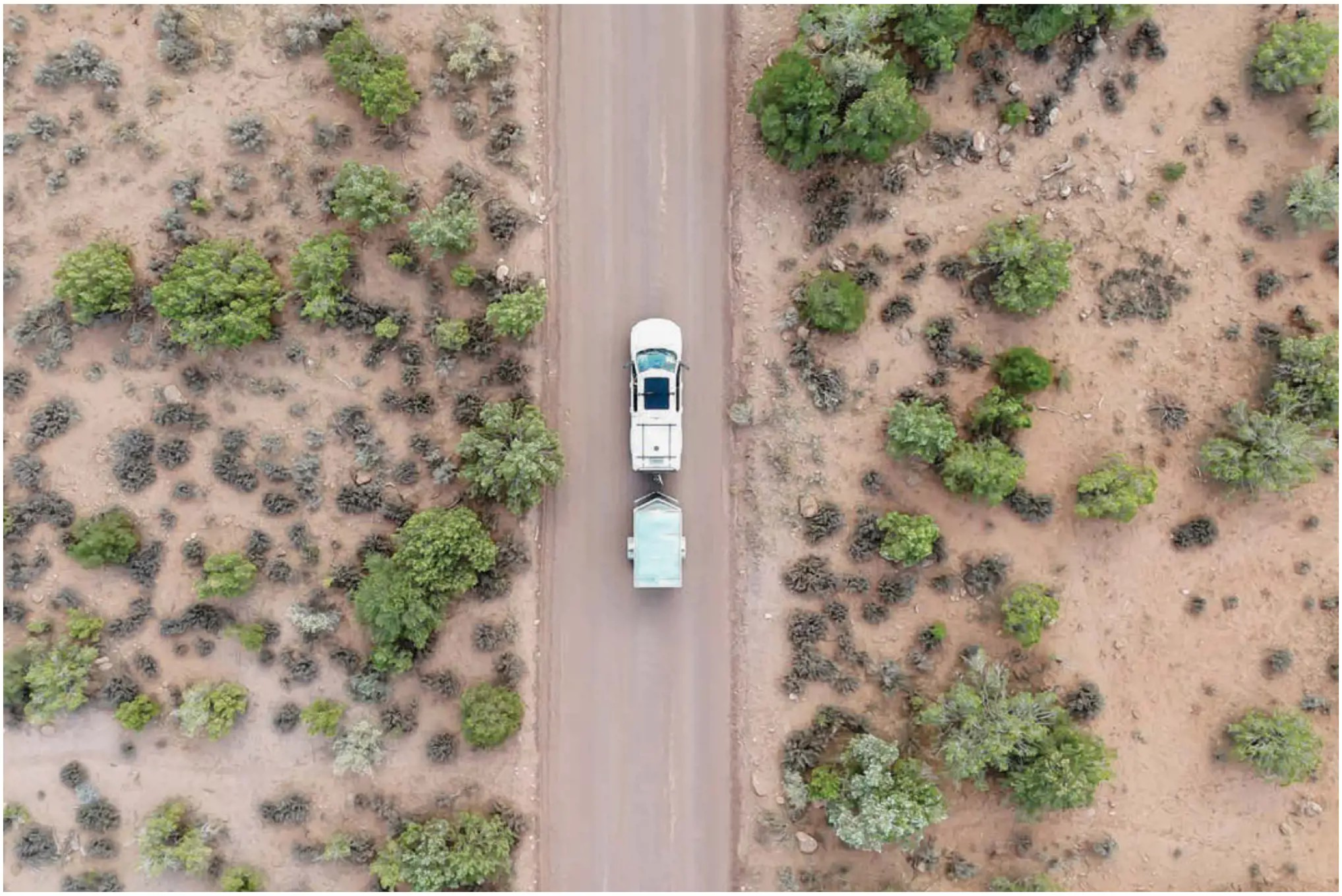
OUR AMERICAN ROAD SUMMER PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



**WINNER!**

***IS KANSAS HEAVEN?***
By Tom Arnhold •
Olathe, Kansas

"I went to Kill Creek Lake near De Soto, Kansas, to take pictures of a comet and the Milky Way. My wife spotted a man and his two boys fishing at sunset and suggested I take their photos. It turned out to be the best photo I took that evening."



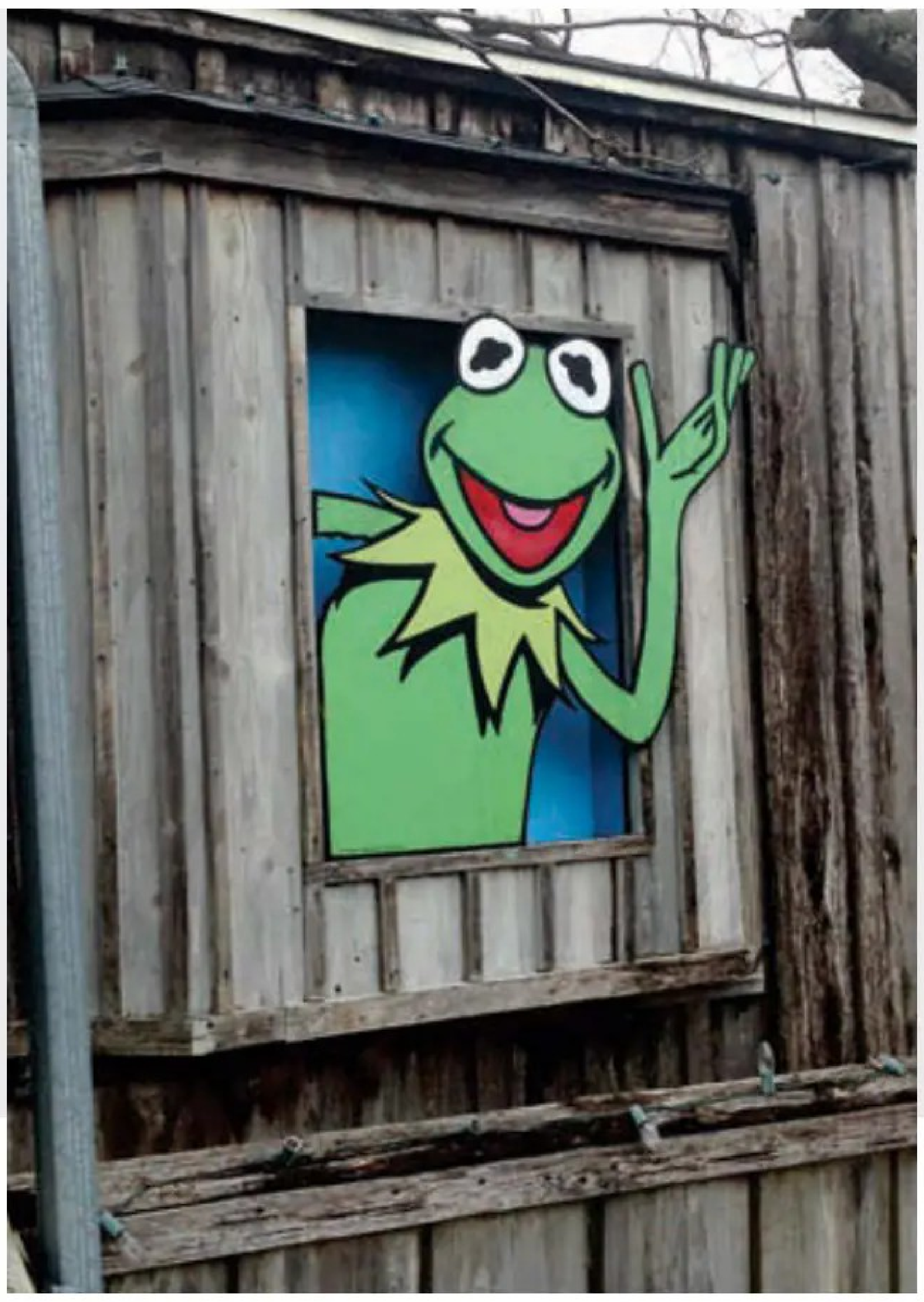
RUNNERS-UP!

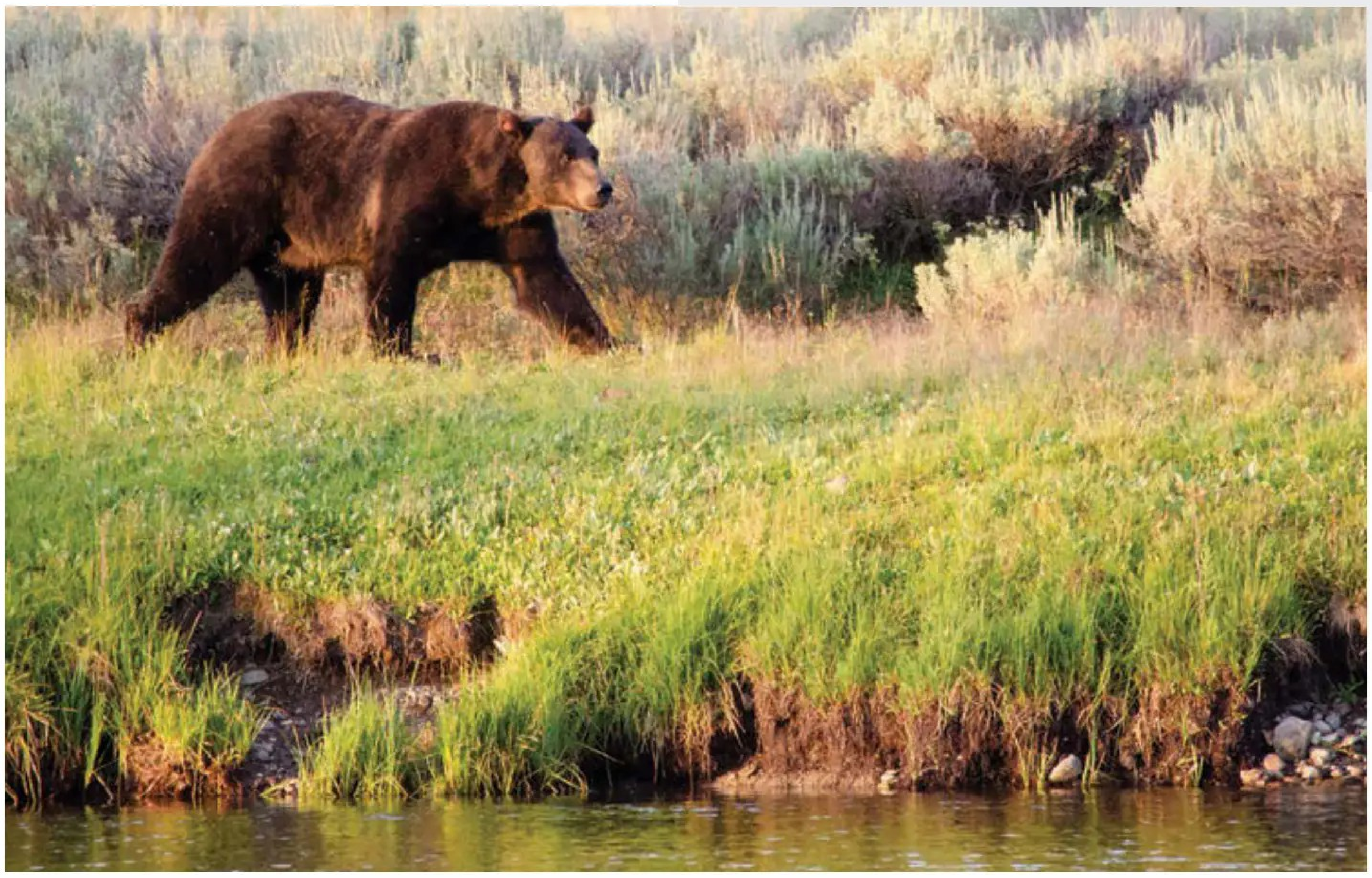
**DESERT SOLITAIRE**
By Jenny Bateman•
Kimberley, British Columbia

This is a drone capture of my husband, our best dog, and myself traveling away from an off-grid-style camping adventure at Gooseberry Mesa in Utah. I love this capture of our truck and trailer traveling down a back road because that is exactly where we find our best adventures."

**THE BEAR NECESSITY**
By T. P. Weaver •
Detroit, Michigan

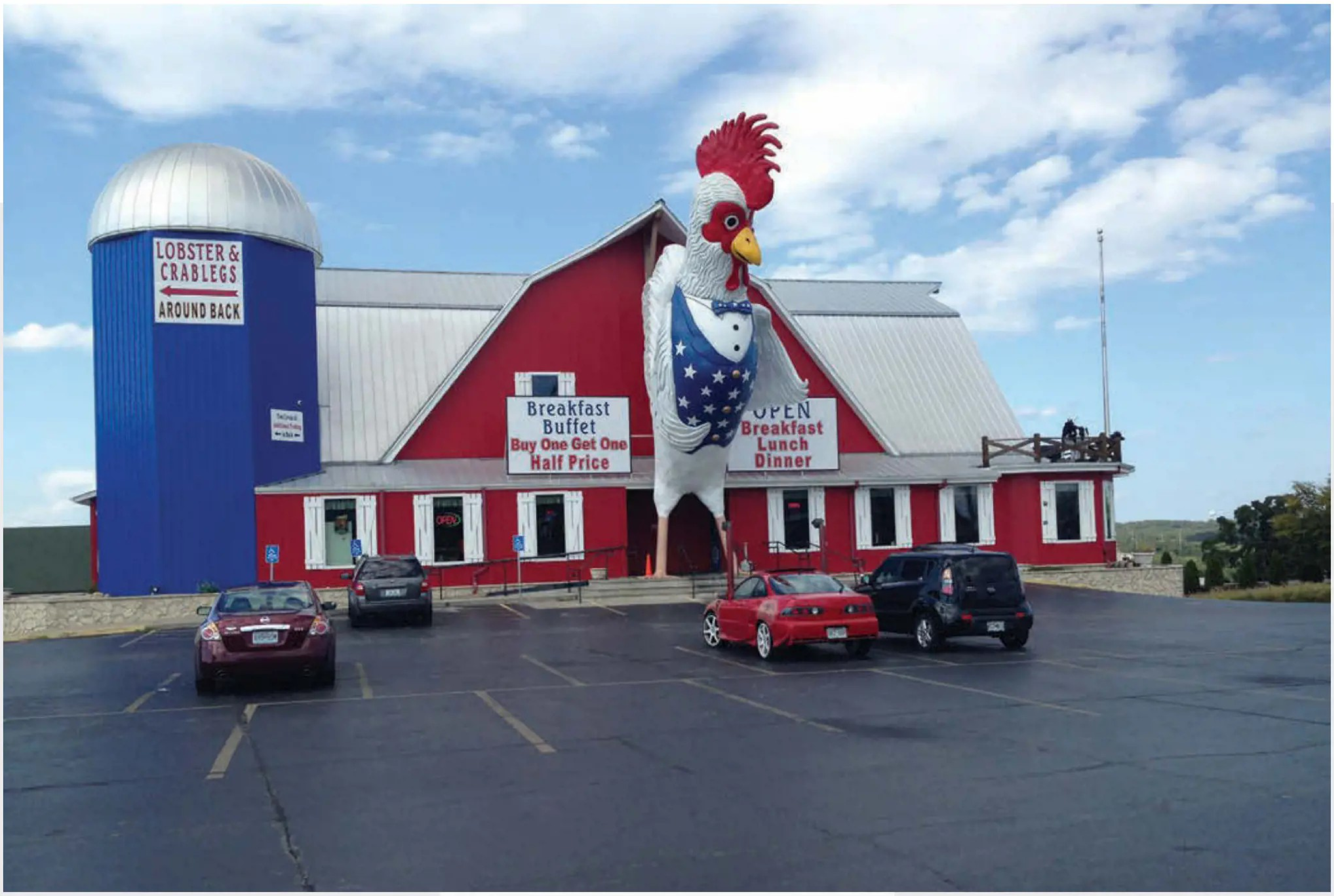
"How do you get a fly fisherman out of a river fast? You let him know that there is a bear behind him on the opposite bank. Last summer, this young male grizzly was often seen strolling the shore of the Yellowstone River. I took some great photos of him using a very long lens."





**EASY BEING GREEN**
By Victor Ham •
Tulsa, Oklahoma

"I was traveling the Blues Highway (US 61) and stopped in Leland, Mississippi. When I saw Kermit, I couldn't help but smile. He brought back fond memories of childhood. I also noticed Kermit on the cover of your Winter 2024 issue of the magazine. I figured you might like him, too!"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**_WE SCREAM FOR ICE CREAM_**
By Tricia T. •
Borden, Indiana

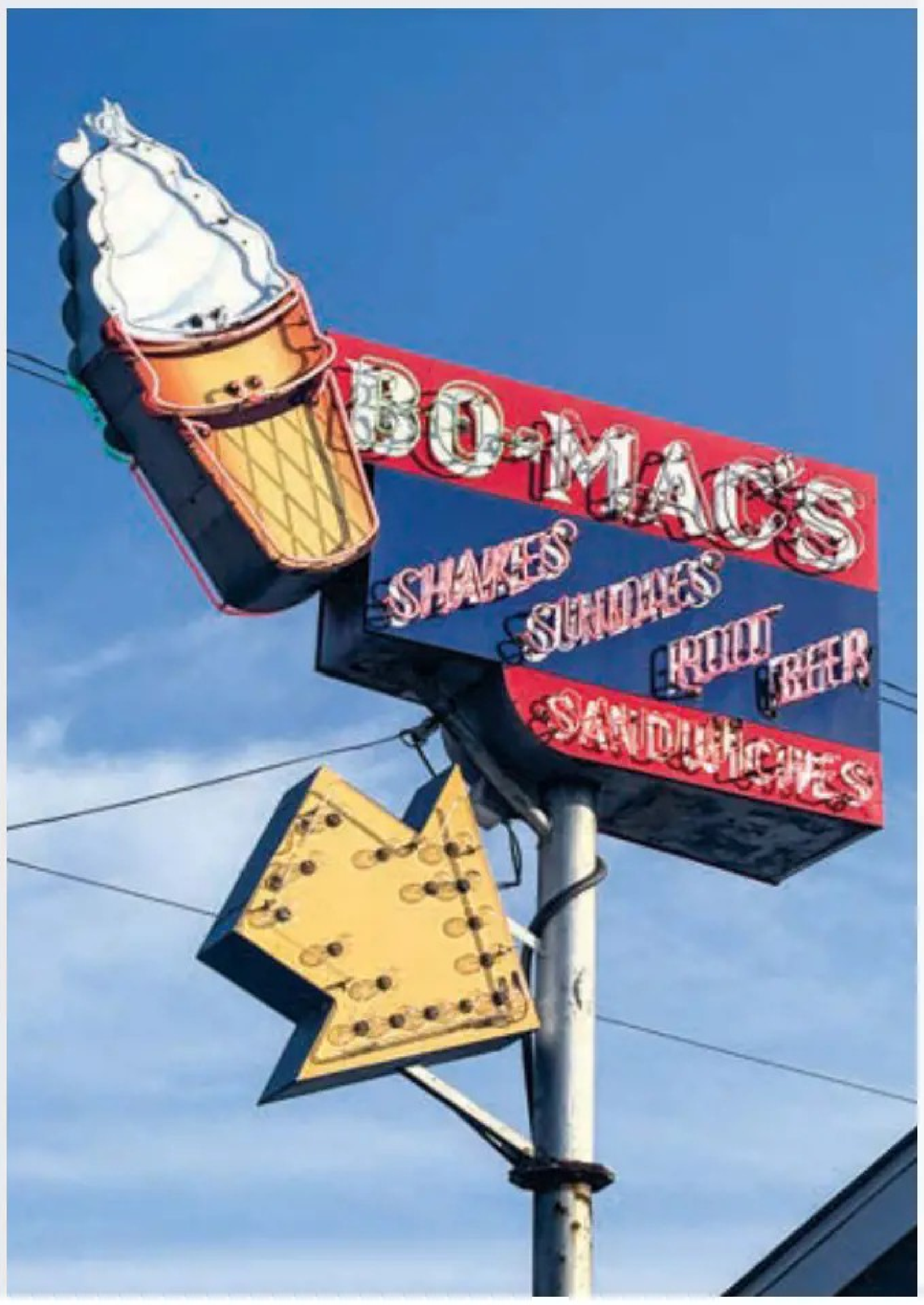
"We stopped at Bo-Mac's in Shoals, Indiana. With a sign that cool, it has to be good, right? The portions were large. Our table ordered shakes, Big Boy burgers, fries, and mushrooms. All of the food was yummy. The Big Boy was too large to eat."

**_RAINBOW CONNECTION_**
By Z. Smith •
Nashville, Tennessee

"The Korean War Veterans Memorial Bridge (formerly known as the Gateway Bridge) carries traffic over the Cumberland River within the city of Nashville, Tennessee. Any time I look at it at night, it reminds me of a rainbow—which makes me smile."

**_KING CLUCK_**
By M. Clark •
Mystic, Connecticut

"If you've seen one chicken, you've seen them all. Well, that's not quite true. This one in Branson, Missouri, is forty-three feet tall. He promotes the Chicken House. The fried chicken is good—but one might expect that from a place with a giant chicken out front."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ROOT BEER
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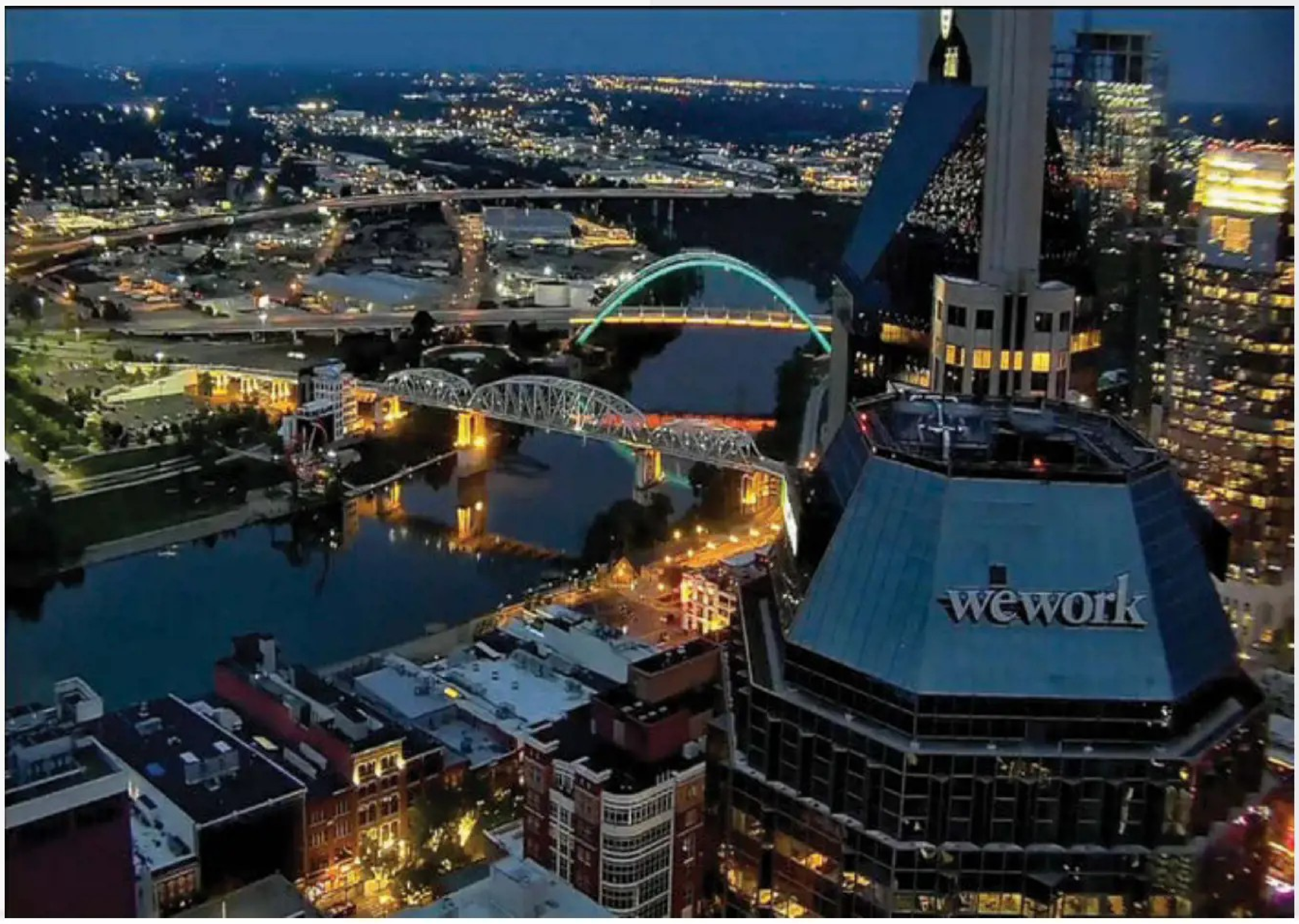
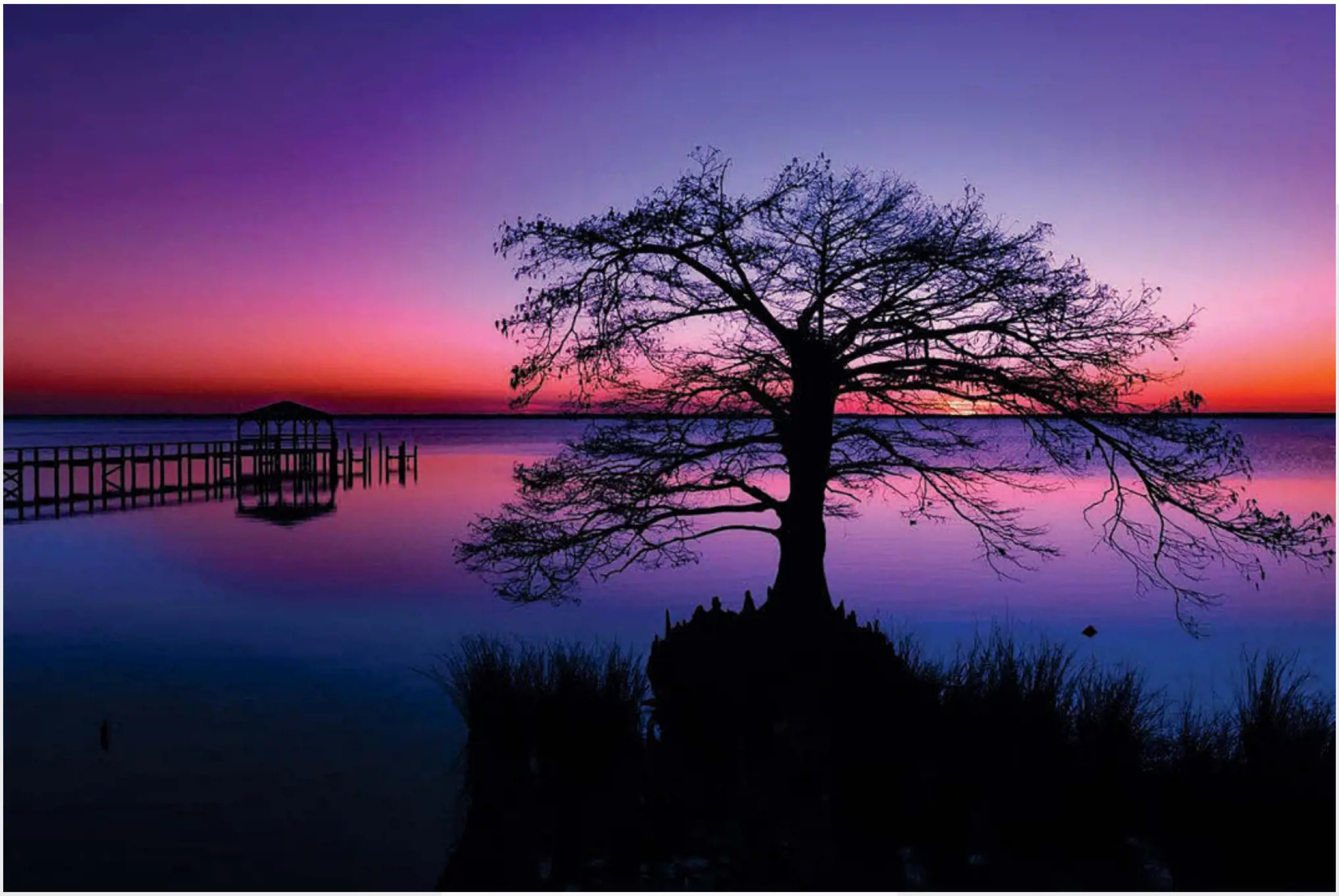




***WHEN THE DEEP PURPLE FALLS*** ↑
By Vicki Resch •
Duck, North Carolina

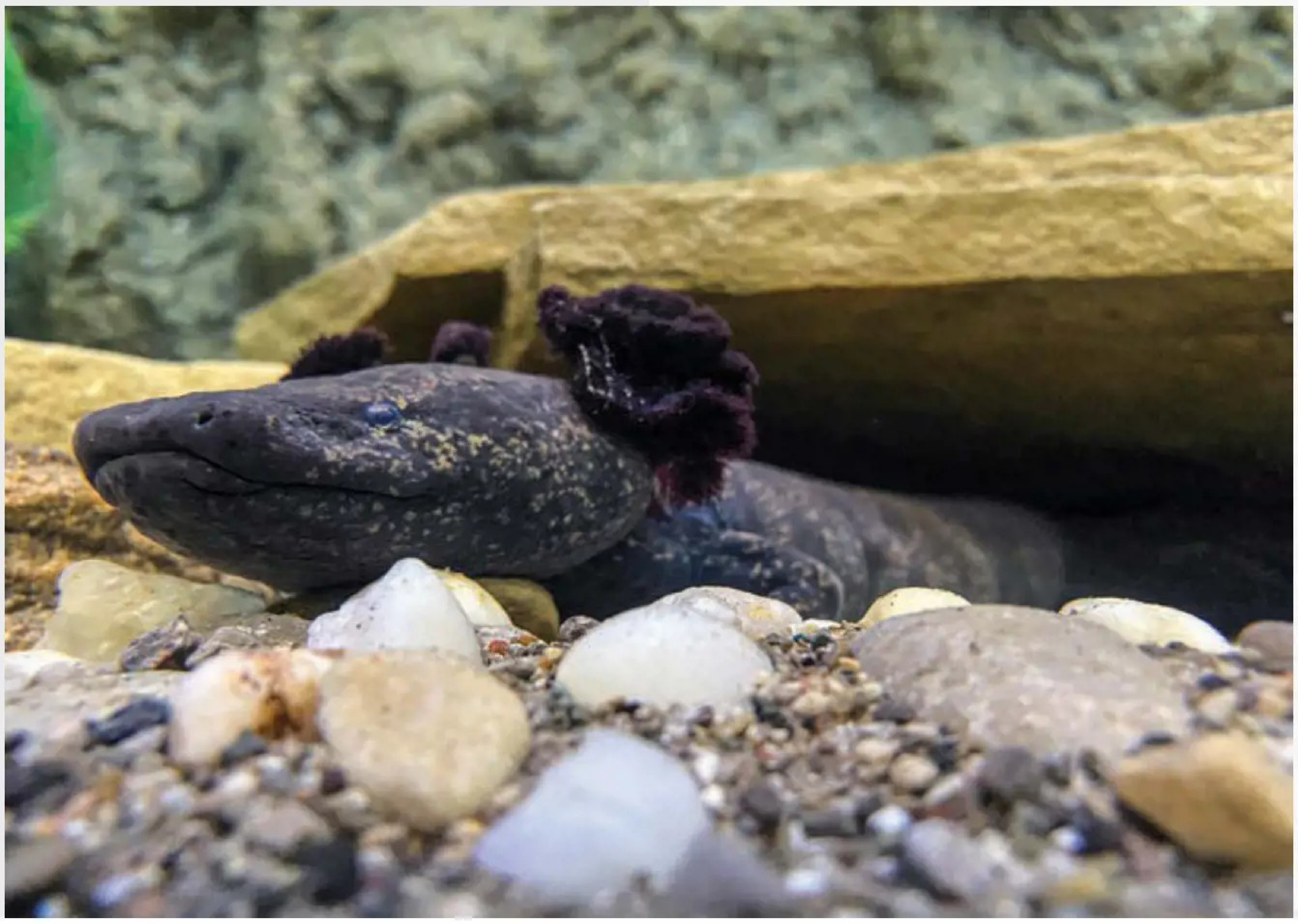
"Here is a photo of sunset at the Outer Banks in North Carolina. It is a time of pink and purple magic. I like to pause and take in the whole of the moment because I know that in the a blink of an eye, it will all be gone."

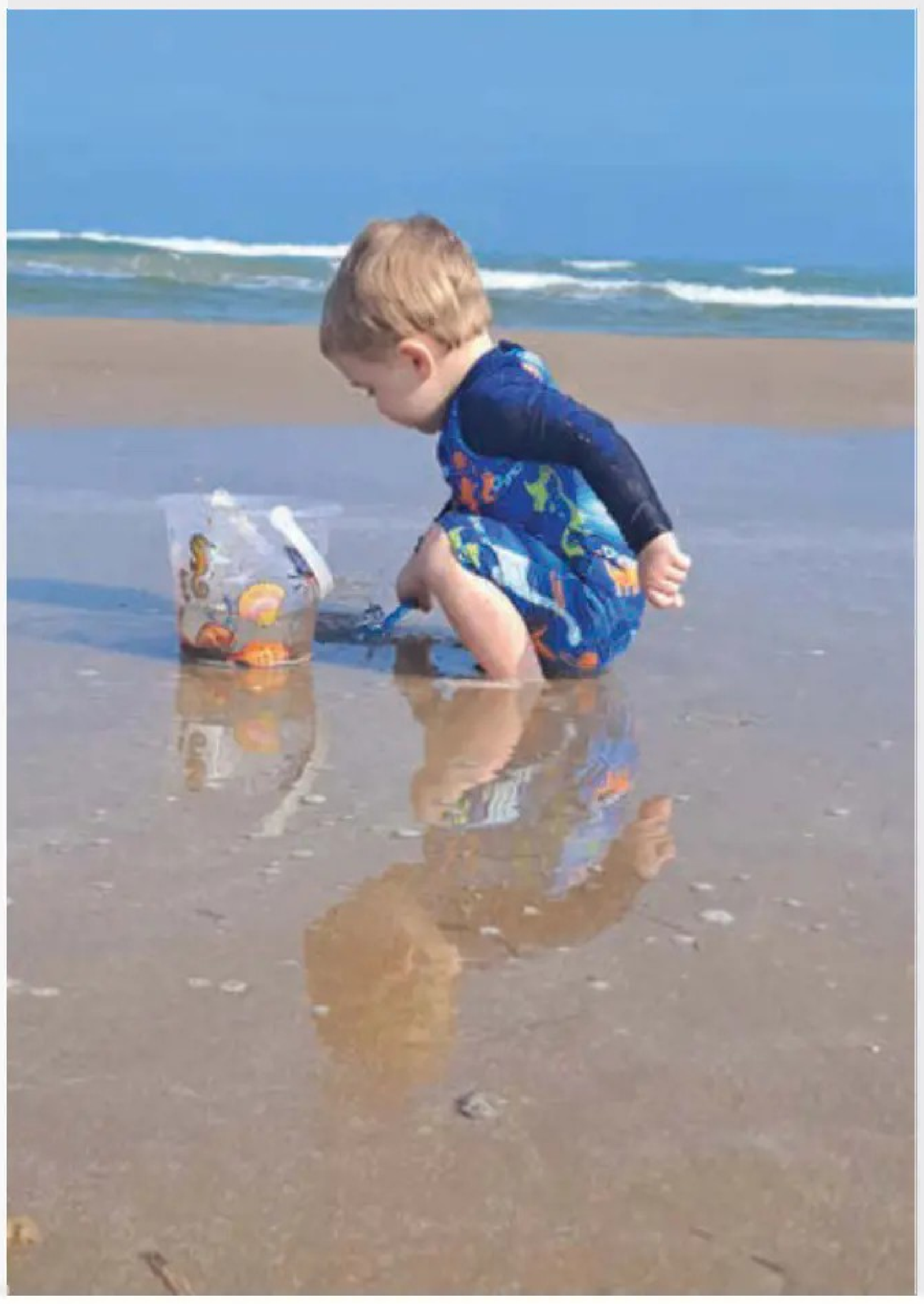
***LET'S CALL HIM MR. BUBBLES*** ↓
By Bella Smith •
Okemos, Michigan

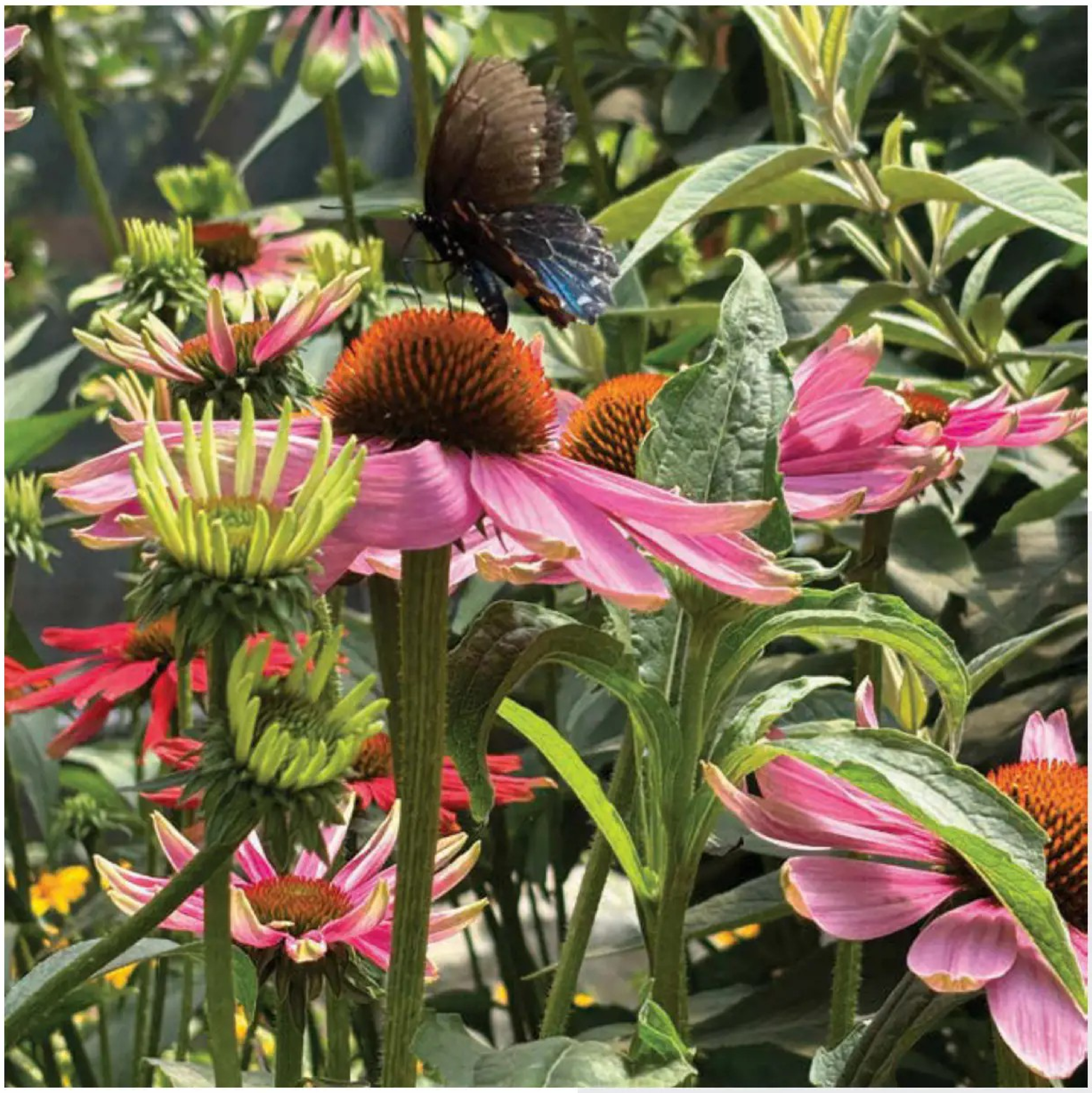
"I appreciate the Belle Isle Aquarium in Detroit, Michigan, for letting me bring my camera inside to take photos. It's such a treasure—the oldest aquarium in the USA. This axolotl seems to like it there—just look at his grin."

***BOY ON A BEACH*** ↓
By Misty Essary •
Brownwood, Texas

"Our February 2025 trip took us to South Padre Island, Texas, where this picture was captured. It was our eighteen-month-old son's first time on the beach, and he was in absolute bliss playing in the sand and water for hours."







## HONORABLE MENTIONS

***THE BUTTERFLIES OF PUGET SOUND***
By Kate Kimball•
New York City

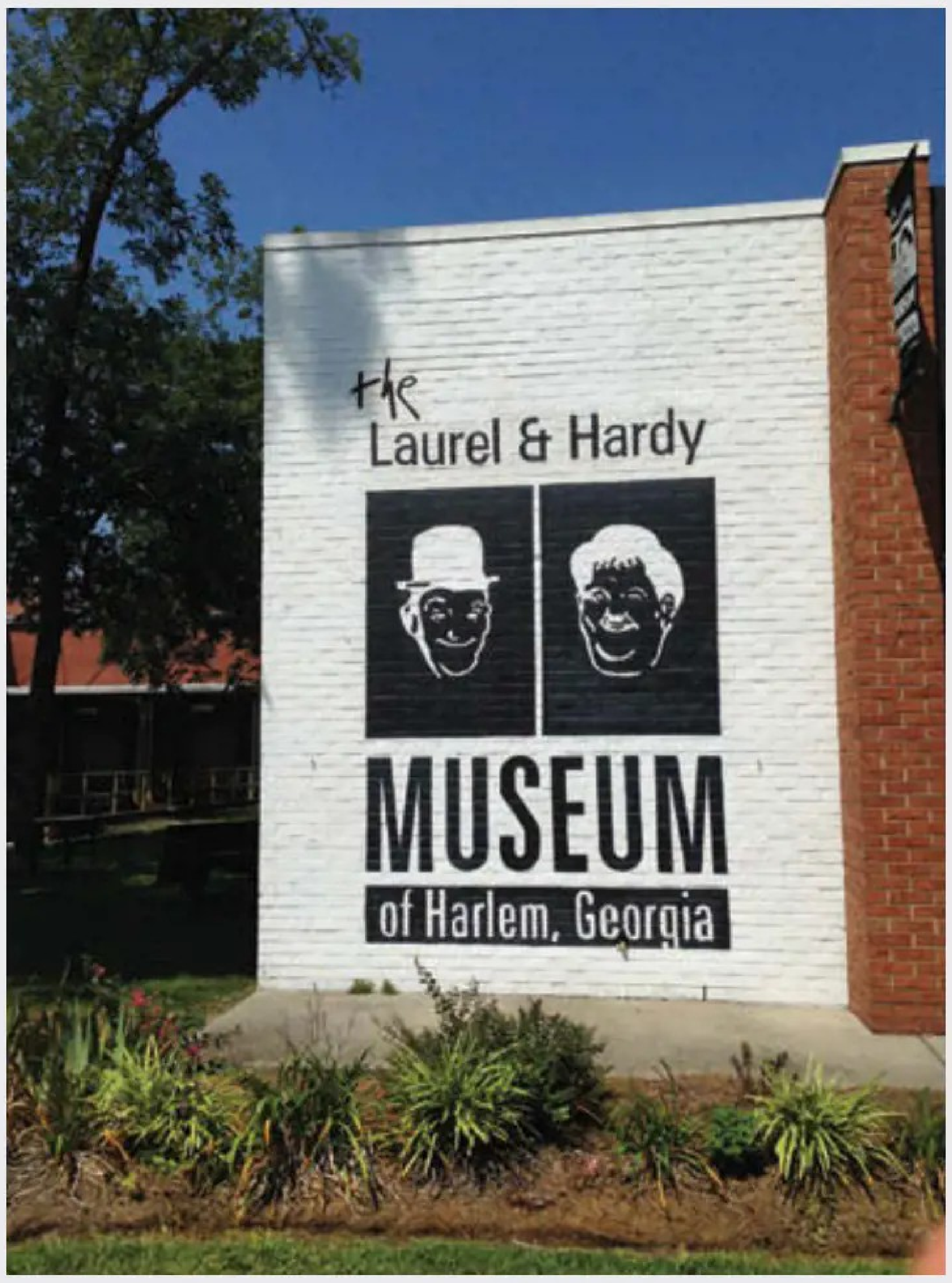
"I recently attended a conference in Seattle, Washington, and took a few extra days to explore the area. During the trip, I visited the Woodland Park Zoo in the Phinney Ridge neighborhood. My favorite exhibit was Molbak's Butterfly Garden. I could have stayed in there all day."

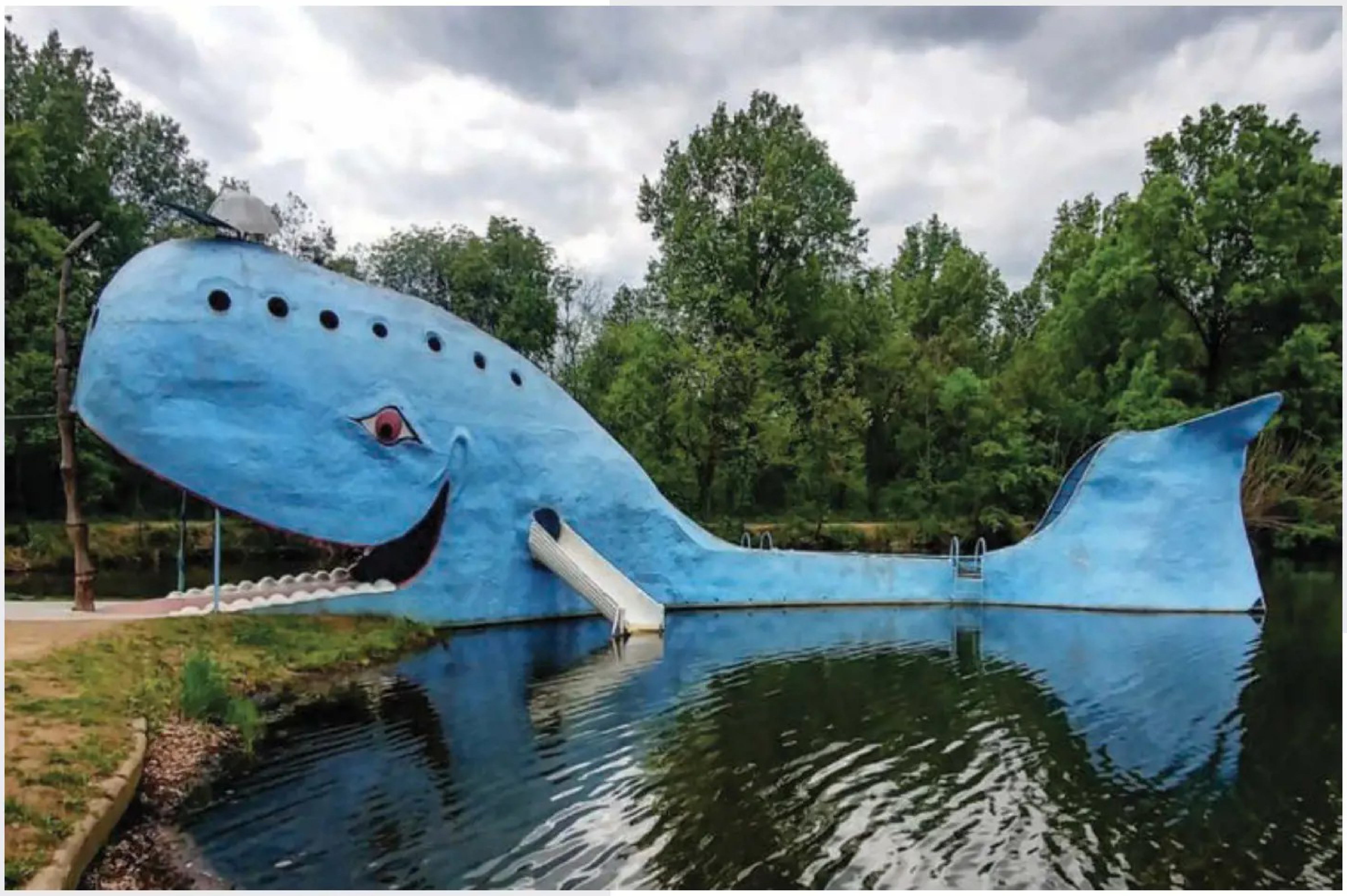
***WHALE I'LL BE!***
Sonia Clark •
Oklahoma City

"It is impossible not to smile when you see the famous big blue whale sitting alongside Route 66 in Catoosa, Oklahoma, and grinning at you. The big blue fellow was once the centerpiece of a water park. In my opinion, he remains the best roadside attraction ever."

***LAUREL AND HARDY WERE HERE***
By Bo Bowman •
Augusta, Georgia

"Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy are among my favorite movie stars. I love their movies. Visiting Harlem, Georgia, the birthplace of Oliver Hardy, I saw the Laurel and Hardy Museum and had one of the happiest days of my life."





***COZY, YOSEMITE-STYLE***
By Caroline Kelly •
Northfield, Illinois

"Last summer, I worked as a guide for youth in Yosemite, California. Knowing I'd be living in a tent for months, my mom gifted me battery-powered string lights to make it feel cozy. In this image, my tent glows softly under those lights, while the Milky Way shines brightly in the background, stretching across the vast night sky. It reminds me of how small comforts can create beauty even in the wildest, most remote places."

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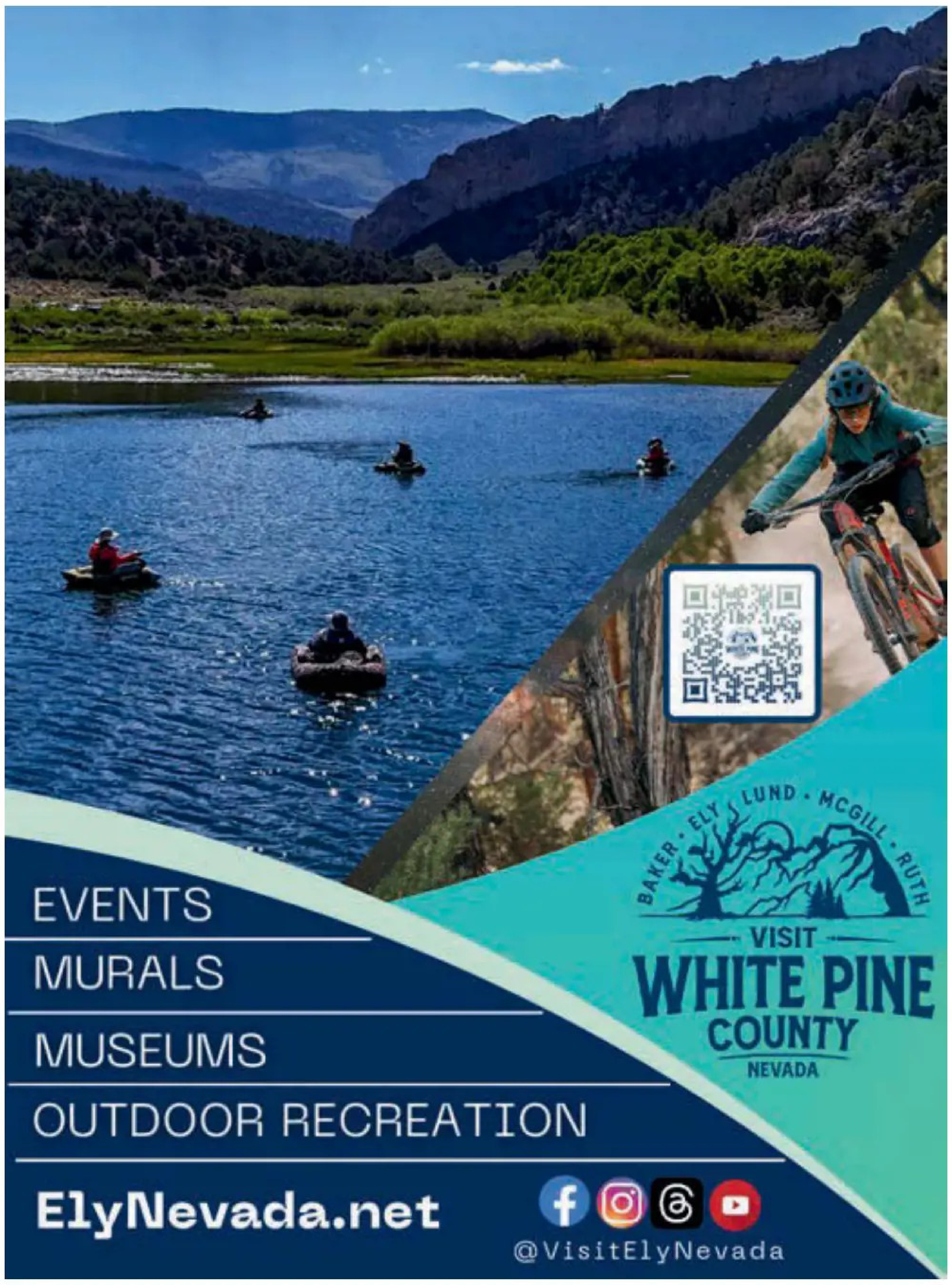

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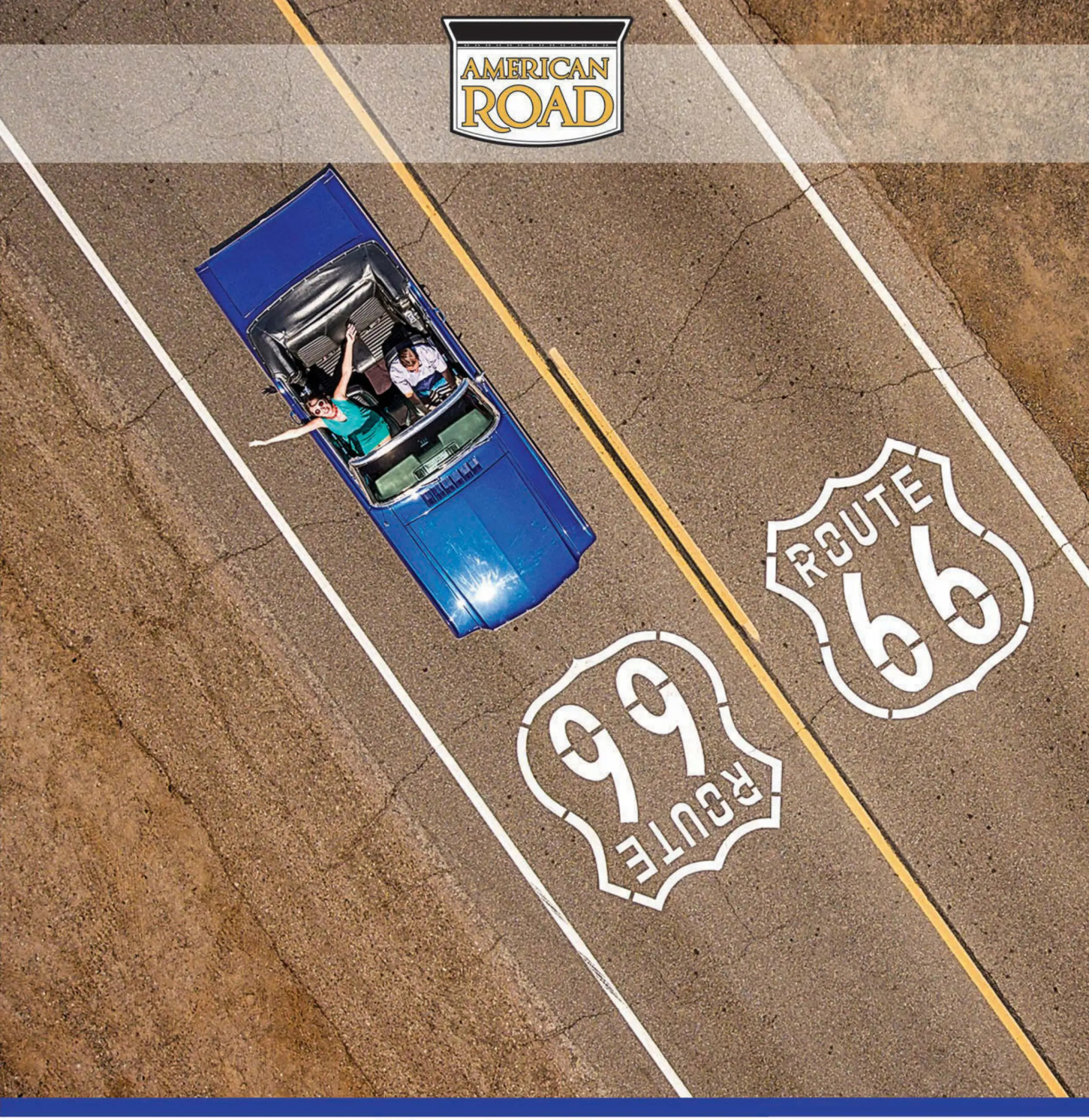
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# Photo Contest

**Find the 2025 contest theme, rules, and prizes here:**
**americanroadmagazine.com/fun-games/free-photo-contest/**

**Photo credit: 2022 Winning Photo (above) by Raf Willems**

# Bronze Fonz
# Milwaukee, Wisconsin

BY LEEDA TURPIN

In 2000, TV LAND—the cable network featuring classic sitcoms such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *The Honeymooners*, and *Laverne & Shirley*—started a marketing campaign that strove to give ever-lasting life to their most iconic television characters. They did so by enshrining the likenesses of those characters in bronze statues and placing them in each character's hometown—from New York to Honolulu. However, before TV Land produced their seventh celebrity statue, the cable network dropped their plan and tossed that statue's fate to the wind. Thankfully, that wind blew straight to the nonprofit group, Visit Milwaukee.

The dedicated member of that group raised $75,000 for the artwork. They commissioned sculptor Gerald P. Sawyer to create the Bronze Fonz, a statue of the lovable 'greaser' star of *Happy Days*. In August of 2008, Milwaukee's Riverwalk unveiled that shining Fonzarelli, with *Happy Days* cast members Marion Ross, Tom Bosley, Erin Moran, Don Most, and Anson Williams on hand to celebrate the sculpture and their fellow castmate—Henry Winkler—who had played the charismatic Arthur "The Fonz" Fonzarelli for all eleven seasons of the show. The life-size sculpture represented Fonzie in his signature leather jacket with his classic thumbs up pose, in the very act, one might imagine, of giving voice to his signature catchphrase "Ayyyyy!"

"To see it in real life and that it exists, it's just...unbelievable. It really is," Winkler told the assembled crowd. He pretended to comb the statue's hair, then slung an arm around its shoulder, noting that it stood precisely at his height of five-foot, six inches. "Just remember that you are not any taller," he joked. "I didn't grow because I have a statue."

The Bronze Fonz was a hit. During the months that followed, Visit Milwaukee won a 2009 Destiny Award from the National Council of Destination Organizations, and a gold medal from the Society of American Travel Writers for "best publicity campaign for a convention and visitors bureau." Pictures of Milwaukee natives and tourists alike posing with the grinning bronze visage became commonplace, and when it wasn't being kissed, fondled, or climbed, the statue was known to catch the attentions of travel writers far and wide. Keen-eyed visitors were particularly amused by the statue's hands—not for their prominently pointed thumbs, but for the initials *HW*—standing for "Henry Winkler"—which sculptor Gerald P. Sawyer had hidden in the dorsal veins.

"I am mostly self-taught, so some of my approaches are unorthodox," Sawyer says.

As time passed, the Bronze Fonz drew his share of controversy. Over the years, the biggest nit picked with him concerned the color of his jeans. Sawyer had wanted the entire sculpture finished in "gleaming gold bronze from head to toe," but the powers behind the project insisted some color be added. Sawyer obliged them and applied a blue oxide to Arthur's jeans that, unfortunately, turned into a shocking shade of teal. People grew very blue about that—and griped accordingly.

Attempts at color correction were made. In 2017, Sawyer himself could endure those pants no longer and painted over them with an acrylic enamel of the type used on cars. "[Fonzie's] blue jeans are now *blue*. Bright, Brewers blue," bemoaned the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, wondering if the paint would fade nicely with time like denim.

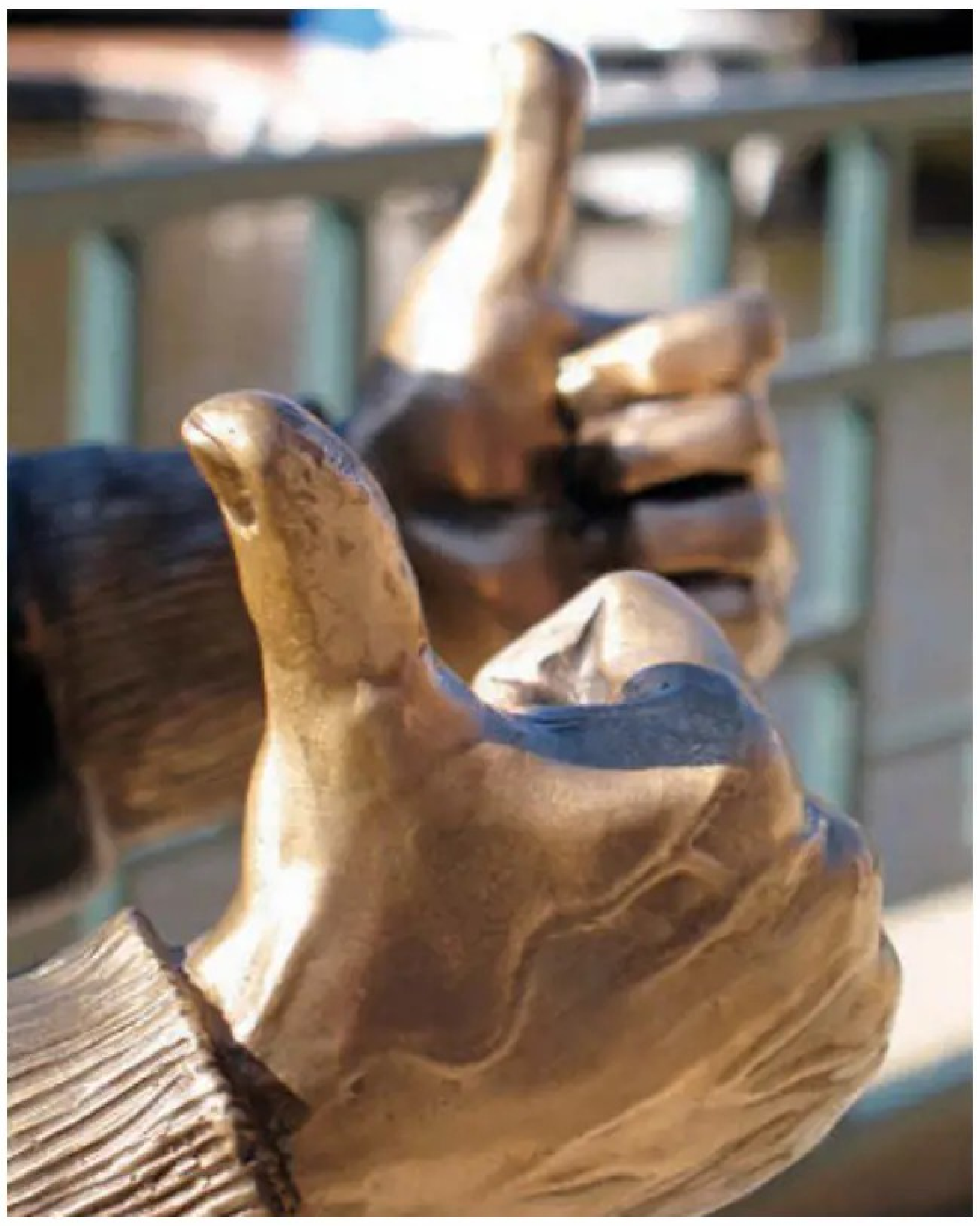
But it didn't. The Levi's scandal continued until 2022, when the Fonz was hauled into the shop like a badly detailed Harley. His nerdy paint was replaced with a traditional patina for bronze—with a slightly darker shade of the metal serving his jacket and a slightly lighter one serving his T-shirt.

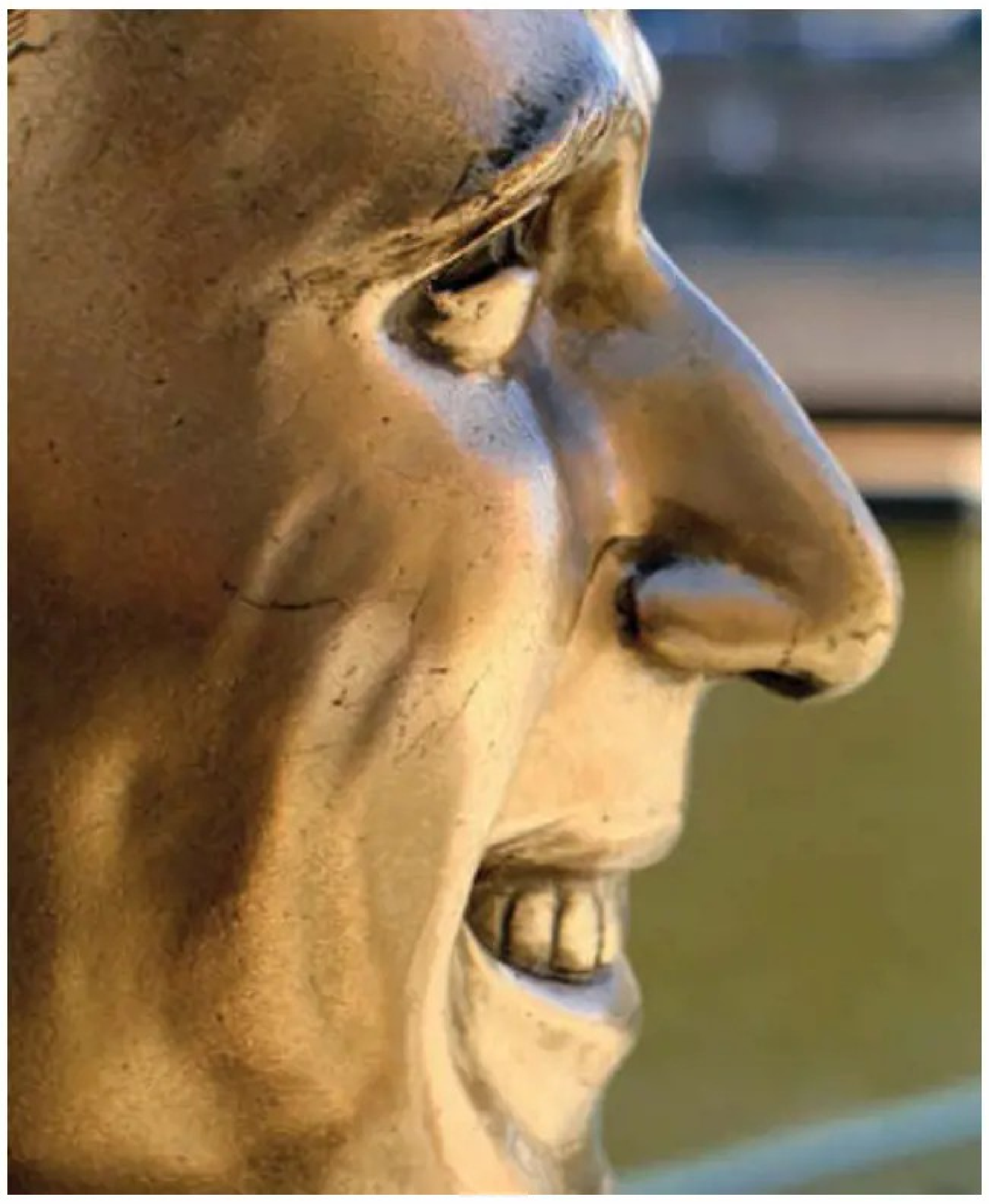
He's been the King of Cool cool ever since, standing on the Milwaukee Riverfront like he's just walked there from the Cunninghams' house. Not a day goes by the tourists don't come, offer a thumbs up, and give him an "Ayyyyy!"

---

**LEEDA TURPIN** is a Wisconsin-based writer and a Roadside Contributor at AMERICAN ROAD. Large photograph of refurbished Bronze Fonz © Kelly Ermis. Bronze Fonz details courtesy Michael Newman.

**GIMMIE AN "Ayyyyy!"** The Bronze Fonz may be the very image of Henry Winkler, yet it has something the actor does not have. Sculptor Gerald P. Sawyer molded the initials "H W" (for Winker) into the veins of the statue's hands [below].





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# AMERICA'S PLAYGROUNDS

OUR NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, BEACHES, MONUMENTS, AND HISTORIC SITES

• BY JESS WINFIELD

## "Inspiration Point"

Anyone who remembers *Happy Days* beyond the Fonz's "Ayyyyy" might recall the frequent mentions of Inspiration Point—Milwaukee's go-to spot for teenage romance. While the real Milwaukee doesn't seem to have an Inspiration Point, Los Angeles, where the show was filmed, more than makes up for it. There are several in and around the city, and in 2021, the *Los Angeles Times* crowned the one in Angeles National Forest "the best Inspiration Point in the L.A. area, and the hardest to get to."

They weren't kidding. The most popular route to the spot is via a roughly 9-mile round-trip hike that begins on the Sam Merrill Trail, continues through Echo Mountain, and follows Mt. Lowe Road to Inspiration Point. AllTrails lists the full route as "Hard," with an elevation gain of about 2,339 feet. Most hikers complete it in five to six hours, depending on pace and stops. It's a workout, but one rich in history, scenery, and Southern California lore.

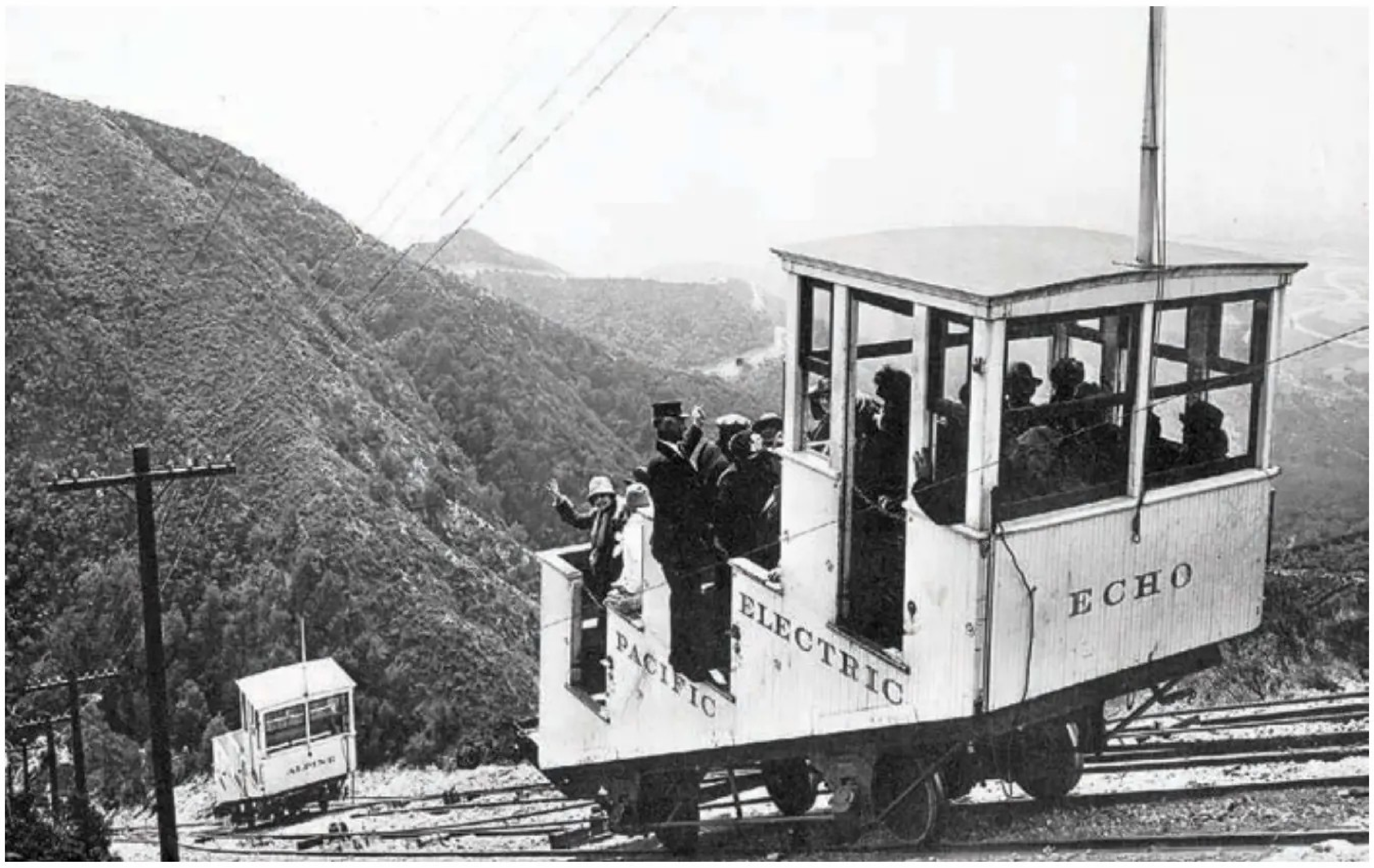
The trail begins behind the iron gates flanked by stone pillars of the Cobb Estate in a quiet Altadena neighborhood near the intersection of Lake Avenue and Loma Alta Drive. The gates are closed, but there is an entryway to the right of them for visitors. Built in 1918 by lumber magnate Charles Henry Cobb, the estate earned a ghostly reputation over time. The surrounding woods are now nicknamed the "Haunted Forest," though it's mostly haunted by urban legends of screams and eerie laughter after dark, strange blue lights appearing in the woods at night, and creepy feelings of being watched on the trail.

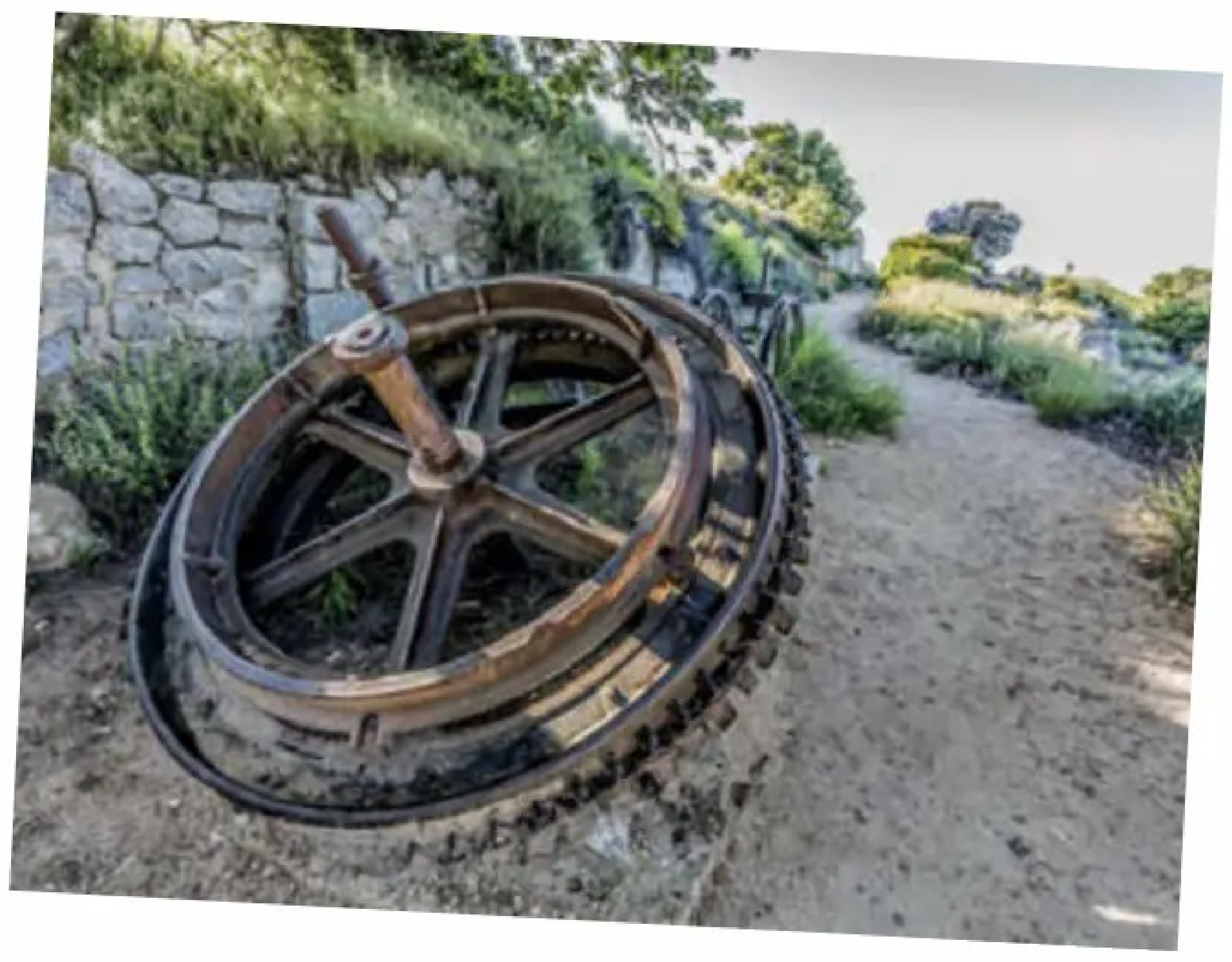
Since Cobb's death in 1939 at the age of 87, the estate has served as a Masonic retirement home, a retreat for the Catholic Sisters of St. Joseph, and an investment property for the Marx Brothers—yes, *those* Marx Brothers—who intended to develop it as a cemetery, much to the dismay of locals concerned about property values. The cemetery never happened, and the house was bulldozed in 1959. In 1971, the property was auctioned and then deeded to the U.S. Forest Service, thanks to the efforts of local conservationists, including students from John Muir High School. The land was preserved as open space—and the old estate became the starting point for one of the San Gabriel Mountains' most popular trailheads.

**INSPIRATION POINT INTERPRETIVE SITE** is located along the Mount Lowe Railway Trail near Altadena, California. The trail is accessible from Chaney Trail Drive and connects to paths leading to Mt. Lowe Road and Muir Peak Road in the Angeles National Forest.

### Up, Up, and Away

From the grounds of the Cobb Estate, the Lower Sam Merrill Trail zigzags steadily up the slopes of Las Flores Canyon, revealing increasingly panoramic views with every turn. That view—and this untamed chaparral wilderness, which is home to rattlesnakes, coyotes, mountain lions, bobcats, and mule deer—was the area's premier tourist draw in the pre-Disneyland twentieth century. To hike these hills is to glimpse a ghost of Southern California's past, when easy public transit and a love of the outdoors commonly shaped everyday life.





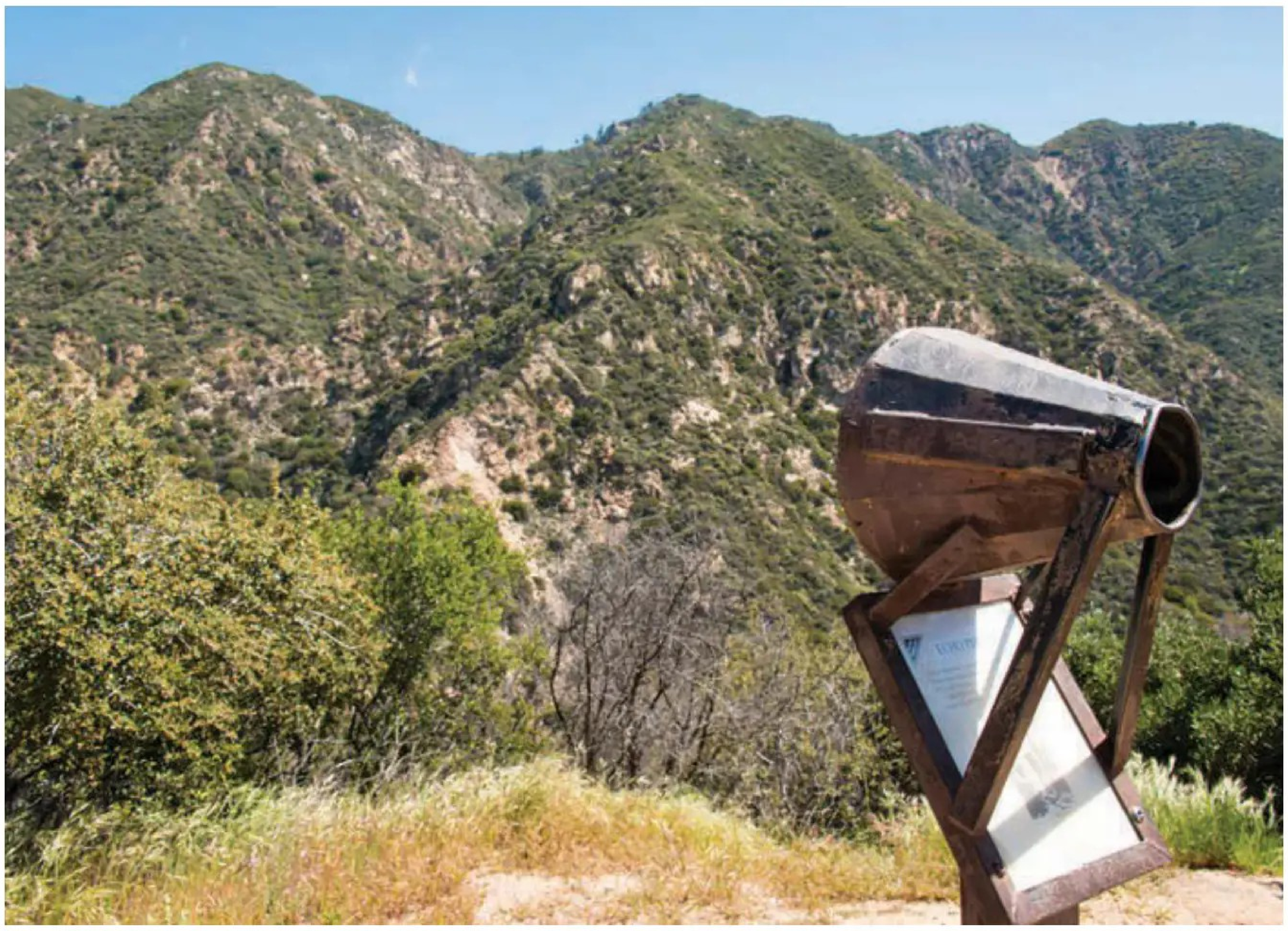
**HANG TIME:** [Left] A circa 1915 photograph finds the car Echo making its breathtaking way along the Great Cable Incline. [Above] The old bull gears from the incline powerhouse now sit quietly rusting in the sun. The trail along the old right-of-way is seen in the background.

The area first became popular with tourists in the late 1800s, thanks to Civil War balloonist and inventor Thaddeus S. C. Lowe. He and engineer David J. MacPherson built a scenic rail line and mountaintop resort complex—including Echo Mountain House and the Alpine Tavern—linked by a steep cable railway (a funicular) and trolley. Fires, floods, and fierce Santa Ana winds ultimately destroyed this once-grand venture. The railway was abandoned after a catastrophic flood in 1938.

Remnants of that mountain empire still haunt the trail. A short detour from the Middle Sam Merrill Trail leads to Echo Mountain, a rewarding midpoint perched at about 3,200 feet. Here, hikers can explore the scattered relics of the vanished resort, including concrete foundations, rusted gears, rail remnants, and the base of the old observatory. Interpretive signs guide visitors through what feels like a ghost resort turned outdoor museum, inviting them to imagine tennis matches, elegant dinners, and stargazing parties from a bygone era. A highlight is the Echo Phone—a fixed metal cone that lets visitors shout into Castle Canyon and hear their voices bounce back, reverberating off the rocky walls.

The final stretch to Inspiration Point climbs gently another 2.5 miles along Mount Lowe Road. As the trail winds northward, the terrain softens slightly, passing through shaded pockets of pine and oak trees and open stretches of chaparral. The elevation gain is still felt, but without the sharp switchbacks of the first leg. This part of the hike feels quieter, more contemplative. Glimpses of the valley below appear through breaks in the brush, hinting at the panoramic view to come.

The payoff is worth it. At the top, a shaded pavilion offers a place to rest and rehydrate while taking in a sweeping view of Southern California. At roughly 4,714 feet in elevation, Inspiration Point delivers 360-degree views. On clear days, the view extends all the way to Catalina Island, seventy-five miles out to sea. An array of old-fashioned sighting tubes rings the outlook, each one labeled and aimed at a different landmark—from the San Gabriels' Mount Wilson and Mount Baldy to the downtown Los Angeles skyline and the Palos Verdes Peninsula. Even the long gone but once famous Cawston Ostrich Farm has a tube trained on its former location. The big birds sanctuary has given way to condominiums.

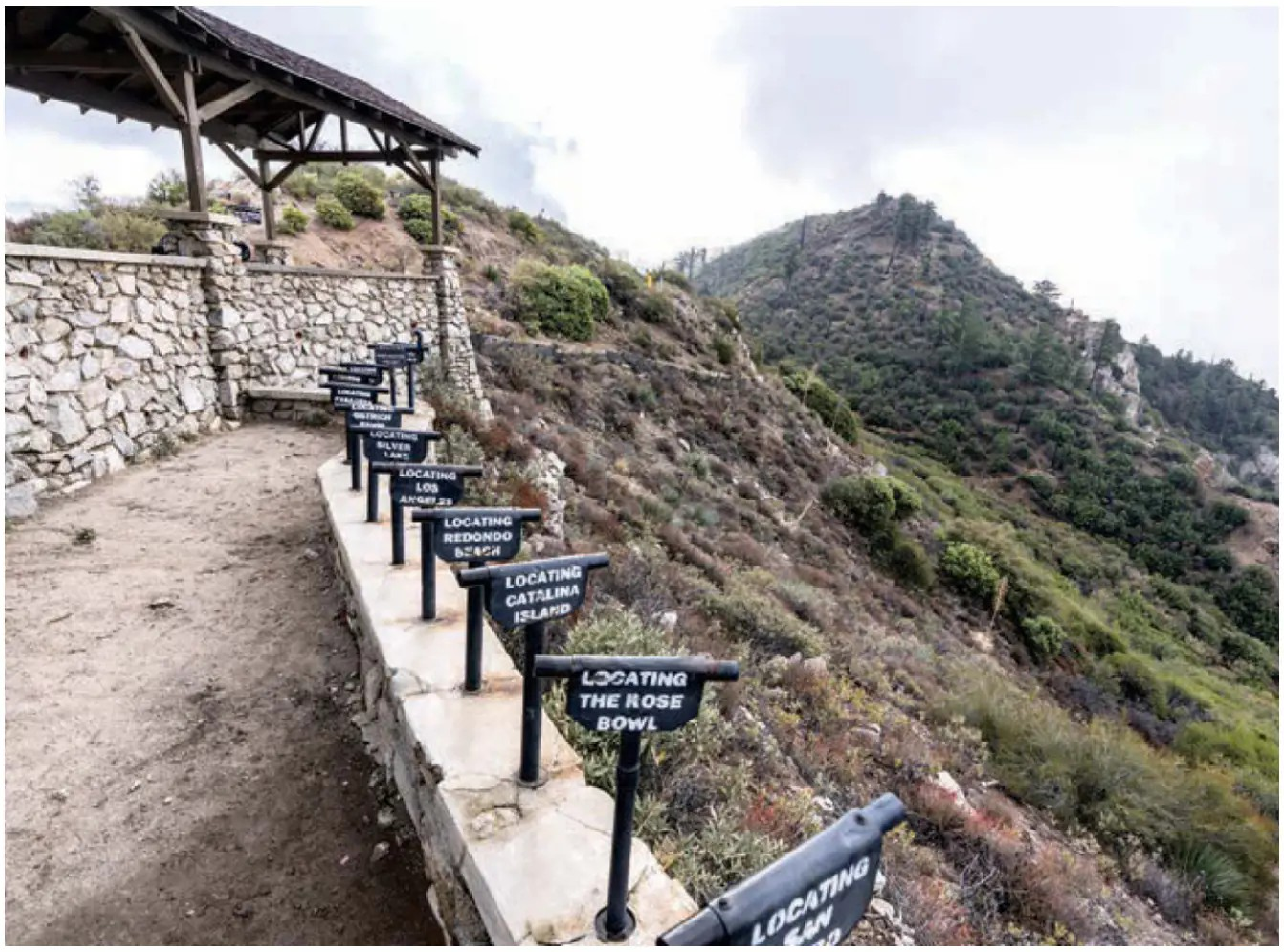


**SAY THAT AGAIN?** [Above] The Echo Phone is a ground-mounted, cone-shaped device that lets hikers experience a unique and playful echo effect. Words shouted into its opening bounce off the walls of the surrounding canyon and return to the ear in a matter of seconds.

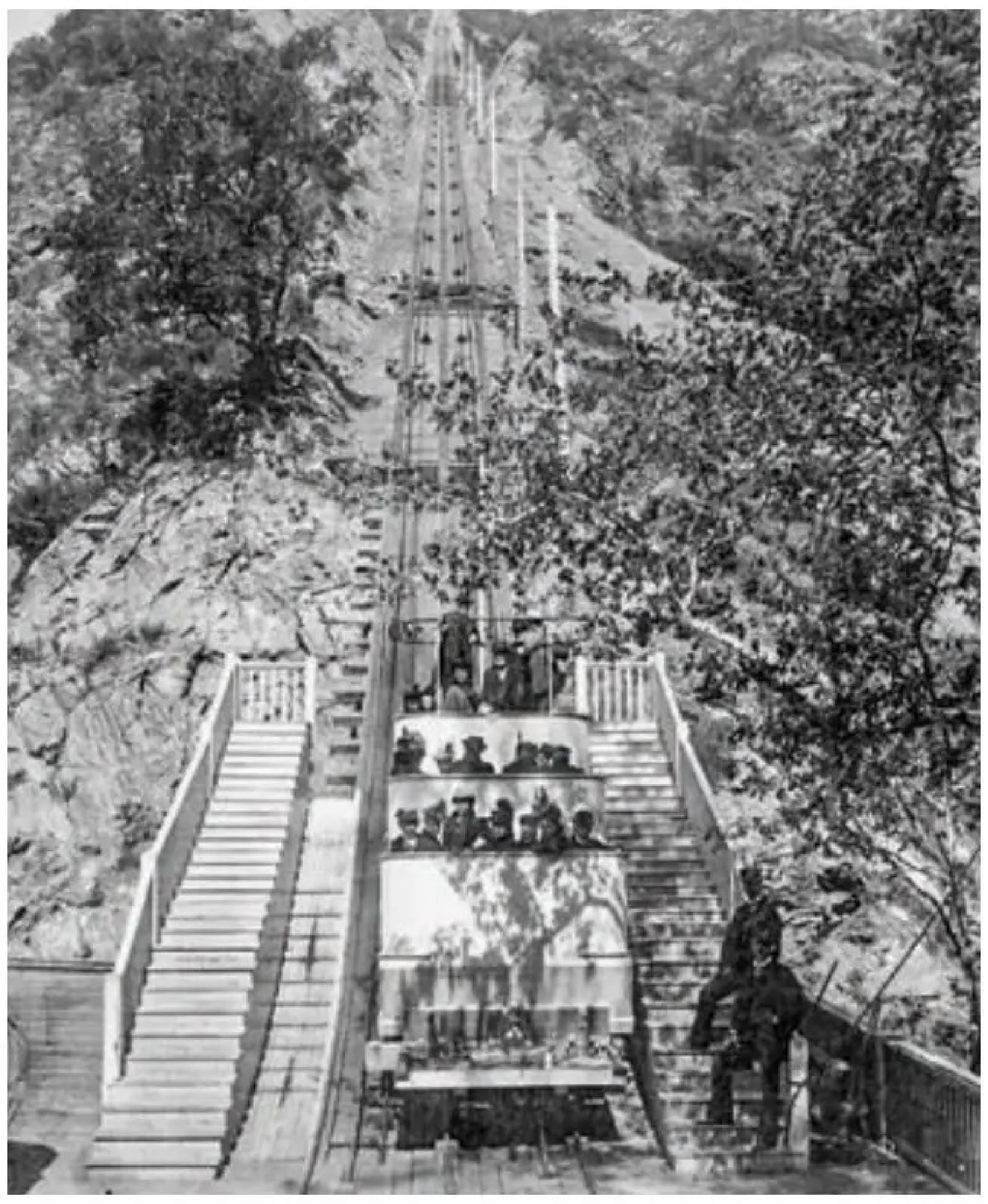
INSPIRATION POINT

LOCATING LOS ANGELES
LOCATING REDONDO BEACH

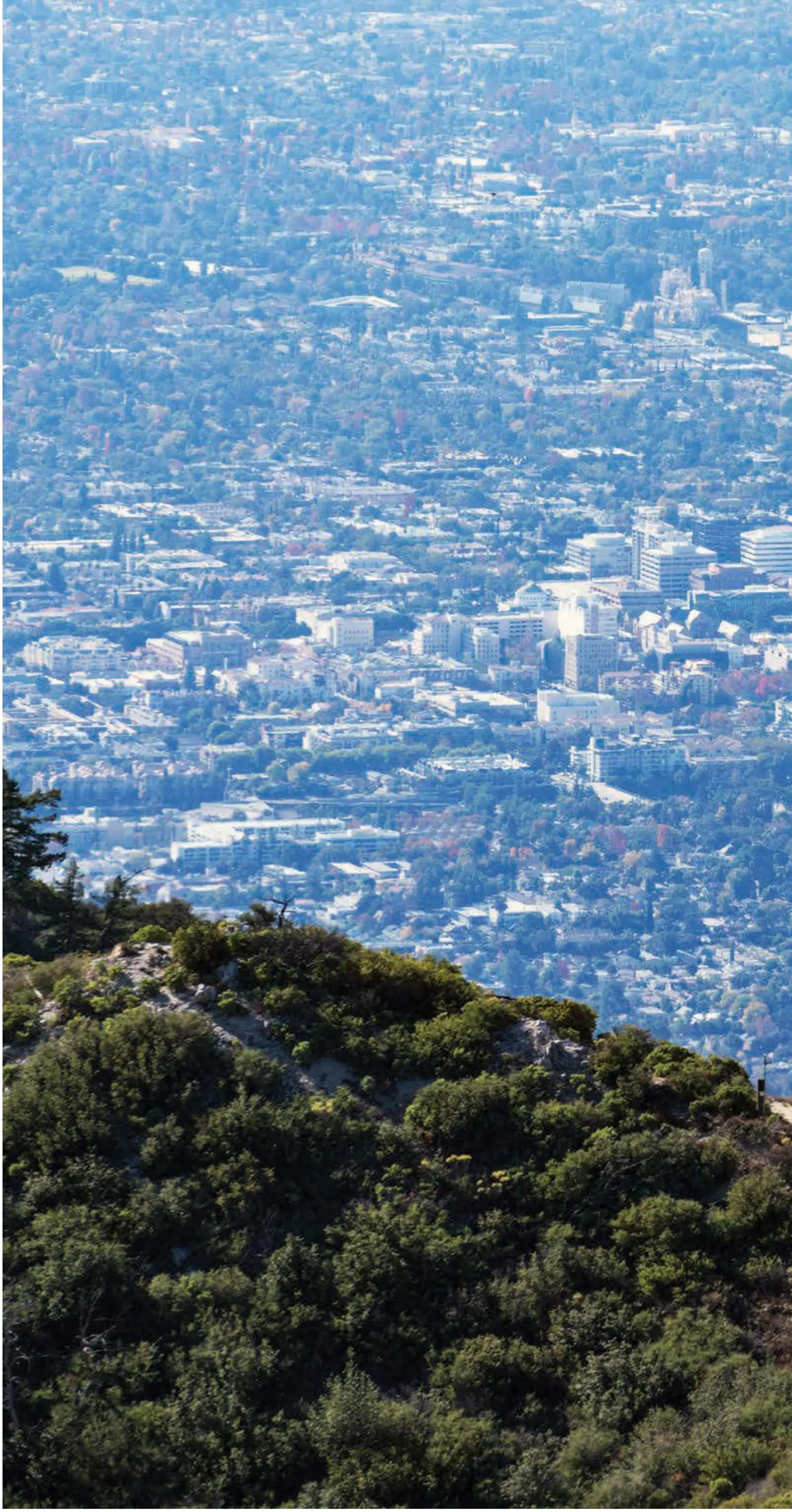
**LOOK WHERE YOU'RE WALKING:** [Above, left, and below] The sighting tubes at Inspiration Point Interpretive Site are trained on everything from the Rose Bowl to the site of Cawston Ostrich Farm. Among them is one gag pipe that doubles back on itself so sightseers can find Inspiration Point.



Echo phone © Danita Delimont. Additional photos © trekandshoot.



**STAIRWAYS TO HEAVEN:** [Above and below] Mt. Lowe Railway passengers entered and exited the incline cars from concrete stairs that survive. [Right] The view from Inspiration Point continues to transport the senses.



Modern photos © trekandshoot.

Closer in, hikers can spot the San Gabriel Valley, Echo Mountain, and the surrounding ridgelines that frame the Angeles National Forest. After the long climb, it's easy to see how this spot earned its name.

What you won't find at this Inspiration Point is Fonzie in his leather jacket or Pinky Tuscadero parked in her pink convertible. Even the Fonz would have needed hiking boots for this climb, and Pinky's 1956 Lincoln Premiere wouldn't make it up the mountain without four-wheel drive. But what you will find is the kind of inspiration worthy of the name—one that rewards effort by leaving you feeling like you've time-traveled through both natural and man-made history.

In early 2025, the Eaton Fire swept through parts of the Angeles National Forest, including portions of the Middle Sam Merrill Trail and nearby Mt. Lowe routes. While the primary trail to Inspiration Point is temporarily closed, hikers should check with the U.S. Forest Service for updates, as restoration efforts are ongoing.

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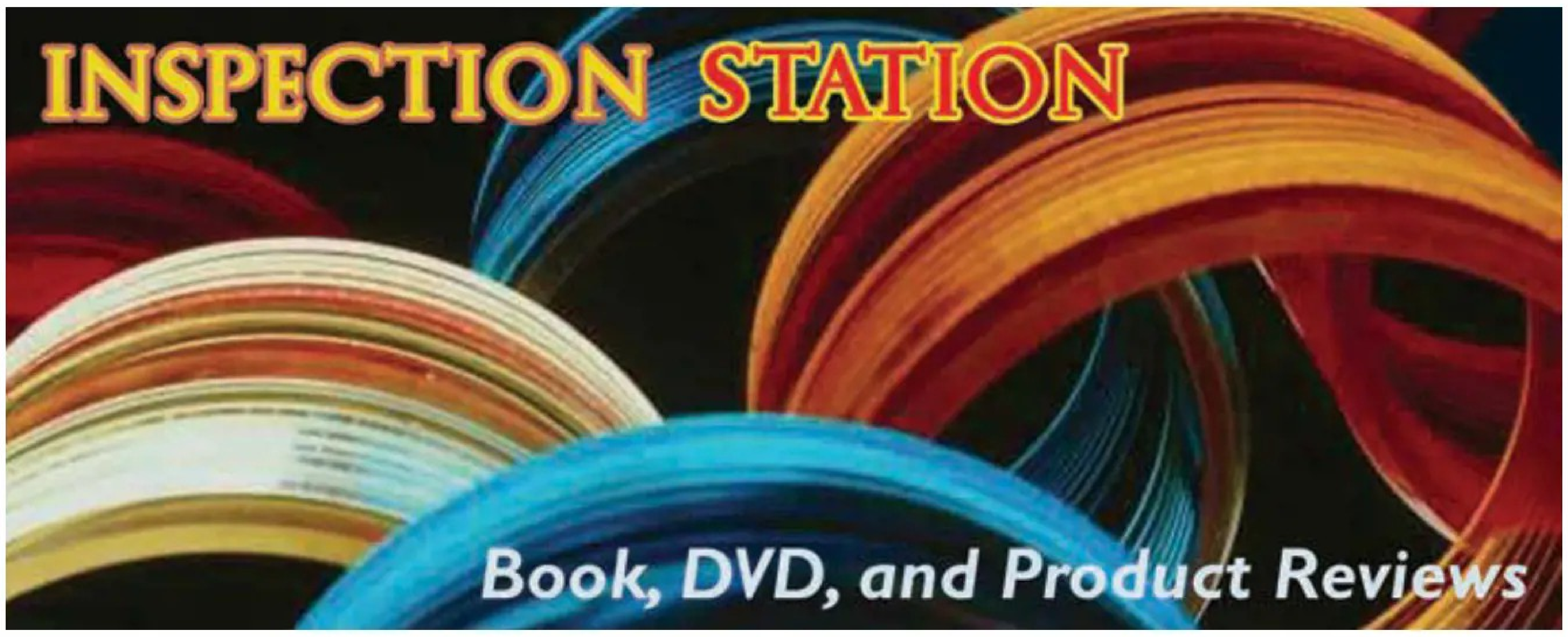
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This set doesn't just keep everyone tangibly engaged during the drive; it makes the miles fly by. And the package is cleverly designed. The card decks used in the four games are color-coded, so there is no chance you will mix up your "Charades" with your "Trivia." The box has a thick paper insert that keeps decks in order when not in use—despite any potholes you might hit. The box is also compact enough to fit in any glove compartment.

With a game for each mood, the set has everyone from Grandpa Joe to Baby Jane covered—essentially making this a peace treaty in a box! Drivers can play hands-free, so these games help Mom or Pop stay alert behind the wheel. The Ultimate Road Trip Bundle car games are perfect for kids, adults, and especially for those eternally lost in the backseat—and a good way to get there when you're on the go.

—CAMI BECKER

## *The Essential Washington State Travel Guide*

By Ghat Joyall
INDEPENDENTLY PUBLISHED
Softcover, 5.5 × 0.32 × 8.5 inches
138 pages, $15.99

Split in two by the mighty Cascade Mountains, Washington state contains two distinct climates: the famous wet, gray (and green) western side, with its mossy rainforests, and drier east, where the Palouse region offers rolling hills and a paucity of trees.

In *The Essential Washington State Travel Guide*, author Ghat Joyall covers it all, with fun and useful tips ("remember, these places are remote for a reason") scattered throughout. The book spotlights such indispensable destinations as the Pacific Science Center, Seattle Aquarium, and Museum of Flight while also surfacing lesser-known gems. The abandoned town of Govan is a delight for both history buffs and photographers, for example, and the city of Bellingham's annual VegFest features "ooey-gooey vegan cheeses."

Each chapter focuses on an aspect of state culture. One explores scenic motorcycle routes and the colorful biker bars along the way. Others dive into the fishing culture, local eats (coffee and microbrews, anyone?), eco-conscious exploration, and even haunted mansions. And of course, there are nods to what makes the state truly shine: hiking.

Details were elided here and there that could have been helpful, but overall Joyall is excellent at capturing the essence of Washington. The book is not the best at any one subject—don't rely on it alone for trekking through the rugged Cascades, for example—but it presents a delightful overview of a state worth exploring, whichever side you're on.

—JEFF NAZZARO

## *Ike's Road Trip: How Eisenhower's 1919 Convoy Paved the Way for the Roads We Travel*

By Brian C. Black
DAVID R. GONDINE
Hardcover, 5.5 × 0.75 × 8.25 inches
200 pages, $28.95

This historical account of a large cross-country military caravan provides readers with a fascinating look into the life of Dwight D. Eisenhower—five-star general and thirty-fourth president of the United States. It recounts the experiences that shaped Ike's beliefs in the nation's need for better roads and made him the champion of the Interstate Highway System.

The book details Ike's youth in Abilene, Kansas—a town of poor dirt roads and wooden sidewalks. It touches upon his army training at West Point and discusses the revolutionary introduction of the tank as a war-changing weapon. But its main focus begins at "Zero Milestone,"—that point in Washington, D.C., from which the Army's "First Transcontinental Motor Convoy" departed for San Francisco on July 7, 1919. The convoy, consisting of eighty-one motorized vehicles, was a test of the military's ability to move long distances during wartime. Eisenhower—then a lieutenant and observer for the War Department—was among the two dozen officers along for the ride.

What he witnessed during the trip convinced the future president that American transportation was not what it could be. Accidents, breakdowns, and extrications

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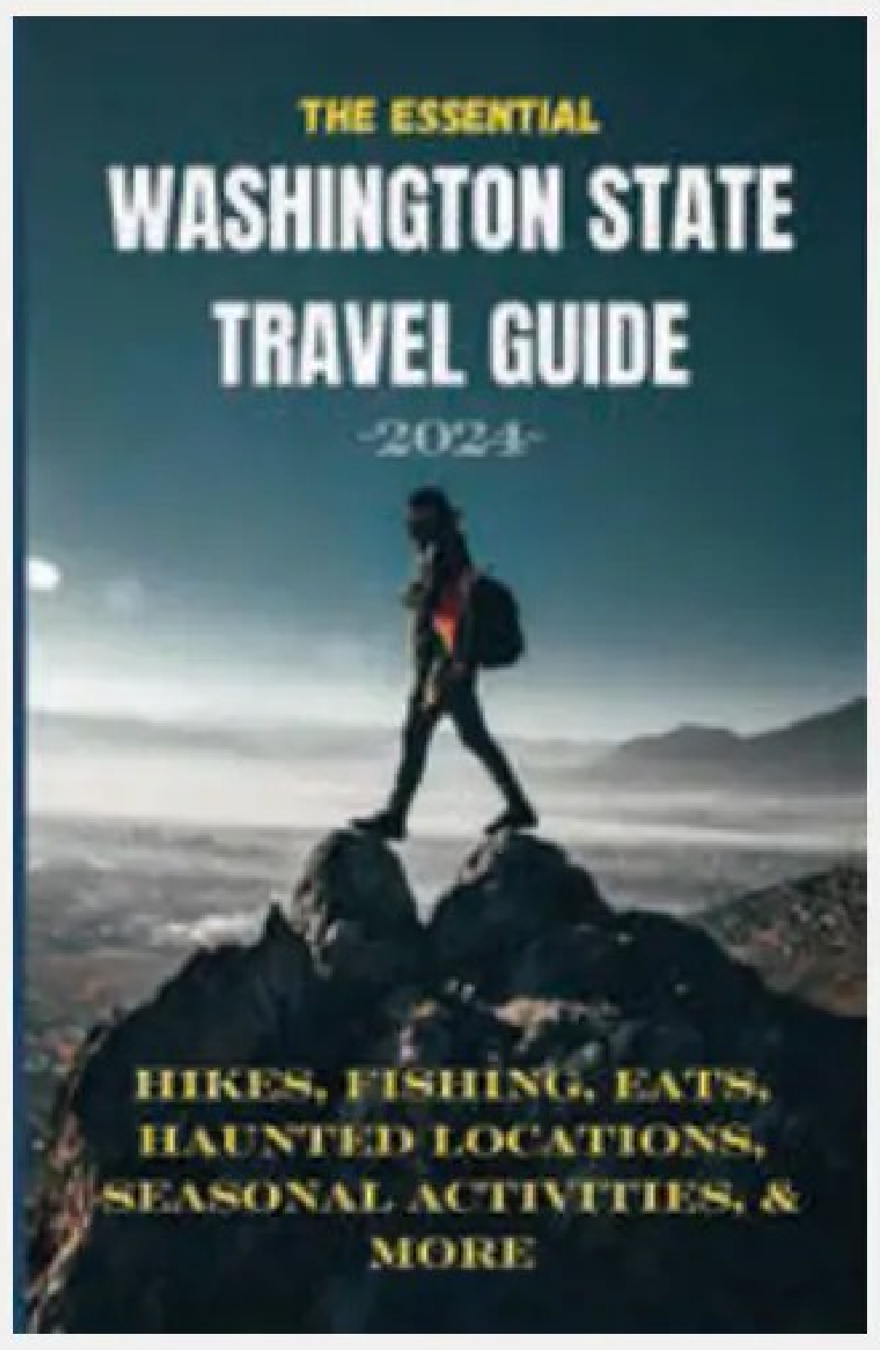
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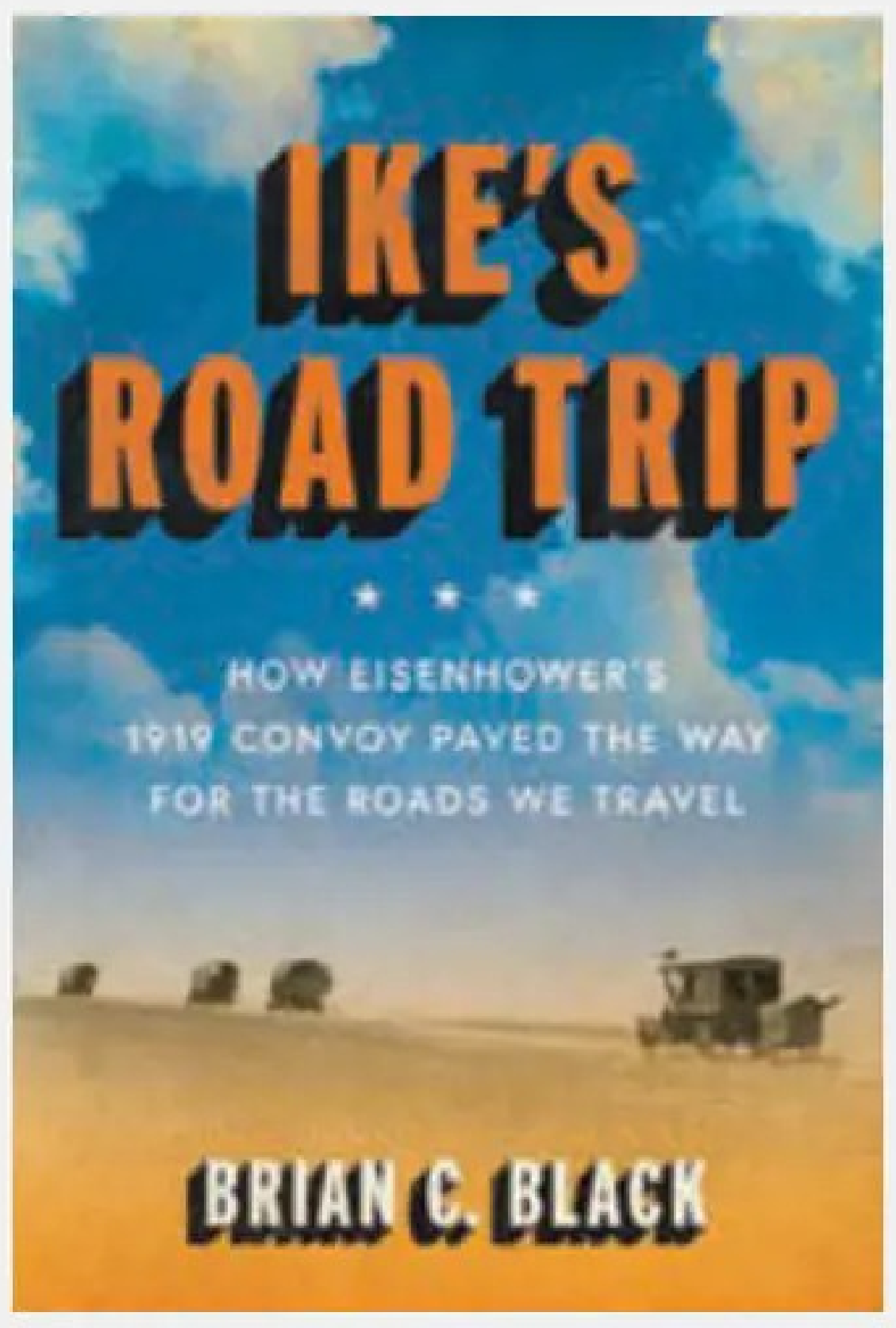
IKE'S ROAD TRIP
HOW EISENHOWER'S 1919 CONVOY PAVED THE WAY FOR THE ROADS WE TRAVEL
BRIAN C. BLACK

resulted in the loss of nine vehicles en route—and injuries to twenty-one men. The convoy broke eighty-eight wooden bridges and struggled to log miles without regular pavement west of Illinois—all of which influenced Ike's actions nearly thirty years later, when he proposed the $50 billion highway plan that led to the roads we have today.

—MARK VERNARELLI

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## *The Road Unpaved: Border to Border with a Brain Tumor and a Bike*

By Risa August
FEATHER & SAGE PRESS
Softcover, 5.25 × 0.52 × 8 inches
228 pages, $16.95

When life feels out of control, sometimes an adventure into the unknown is the best medicine. In *The Road Unpaved: Border to Border with a Brain Tumor and a Bike*, author Risa August shares a deeply personal journey of self-discovery in the wake of a rare pituitary disease diagnosis.

As she recovers from brain surgery and a marriage that has crumbled after nearly two decades, August embarks upon an epic bike tour in hopes of shifting gears and getting her life back on track. She joins a group of twelve cyclists for a six-week, 1,845-mile trek from Canada to Mexico along the Pacific Coast Highway.

While the ride would have once been a breeze for her, it's now a challenge unlike anything she has ever faced before. Joined by an unlikely companion—a brain tumor she has humorously nicknamed "Bubba"—she pedals through relentless pain, torrential rainfall, and mournful memories of her past that lead her up and down past the scenery of San Francisco, Big Sur, and beyond.

If you're looking for a lighthearted travelogue, this isn't the book for you. If you're seeking a story of true resilience and perseverance, August's story will speak to you deeply. As she bravely navigates through physical, emotional, and mental roadblocks, she realizes she is transforming into the person she was meant to be all along. This is an inspiring, engaging memoir that will stick with you long after you read the final pages.

—KENDRA RUCZAK

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## *Sticker by Number National Parks*

By Cottage Door Press
PARAGON BOOKS
Softcover, 8.88 × 0.25 × 12.63 inches
80 pages, $12.99

This *Sticker by Number National Parks* book will have your little ones wearing the badge of "junior ranger" in no time. You remember those paint-by-number kits, right? Well, this is the same gig, but with stickers—less Picasso, more arts-and-crafts. A duo of explorers, ages 6 and 10, fresh from their treks across real national parks, were each given the book and they were as hooked as a trout on a fishing line.

Keep in mind, though, the 6-year-old needed a bit of a hand reading the text. Luckily, with the number and shape matching involved, the little tyke had as productive a training as Rocky Balboa.

Now, let's talk about the stickers. In terms of stickability, they've got the stamina of a chubby groundhog on a marathon—not the best, especially near the binding.

But hey, getting hands-on with the green-filled illustrations and all the 411 on the national parks—well, it's like David Attenborough time for their brains. For example, bighorn sheep are the mascots of Rocky Mountain National Park. And, did you know that visitors to the Smoky Mountains can turn into part-time wildlife spotters with a cell phone app? More thrilling than Pokémon Go, folks, except the catch includes plant, bird, insect, and animal species. The data collected is shared with scientists—it's like helping Steve Irwin study the ecosystem. Just make sure you've got some glue sticks on deck for those traitorous stickers.

—CAMI BECKER

---

## Instant Print Camera for Kids

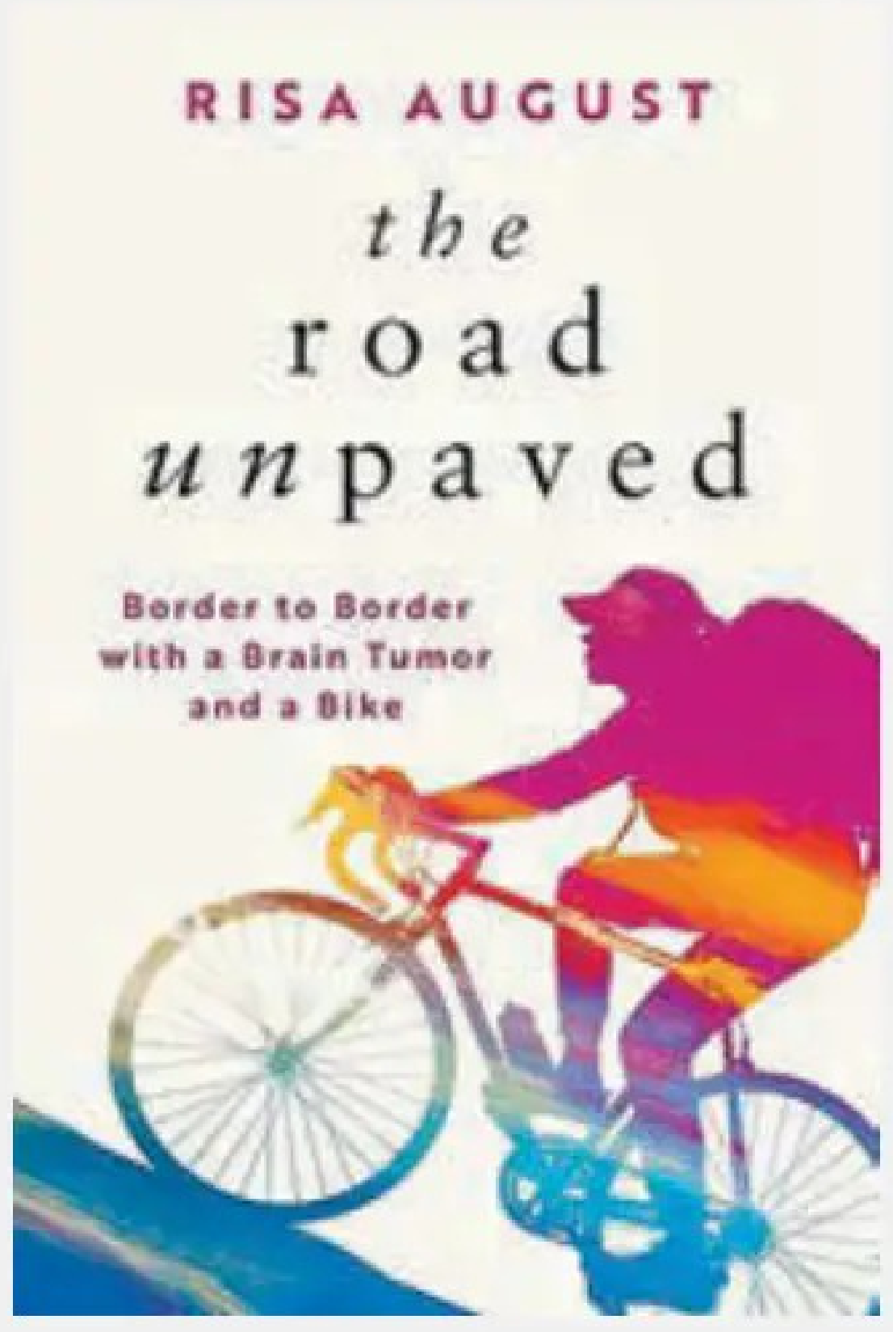
GOFUNLY
3.0" HD, 32GB memory card, USB included
Body available in pink, blue, green, or purple
$56.99

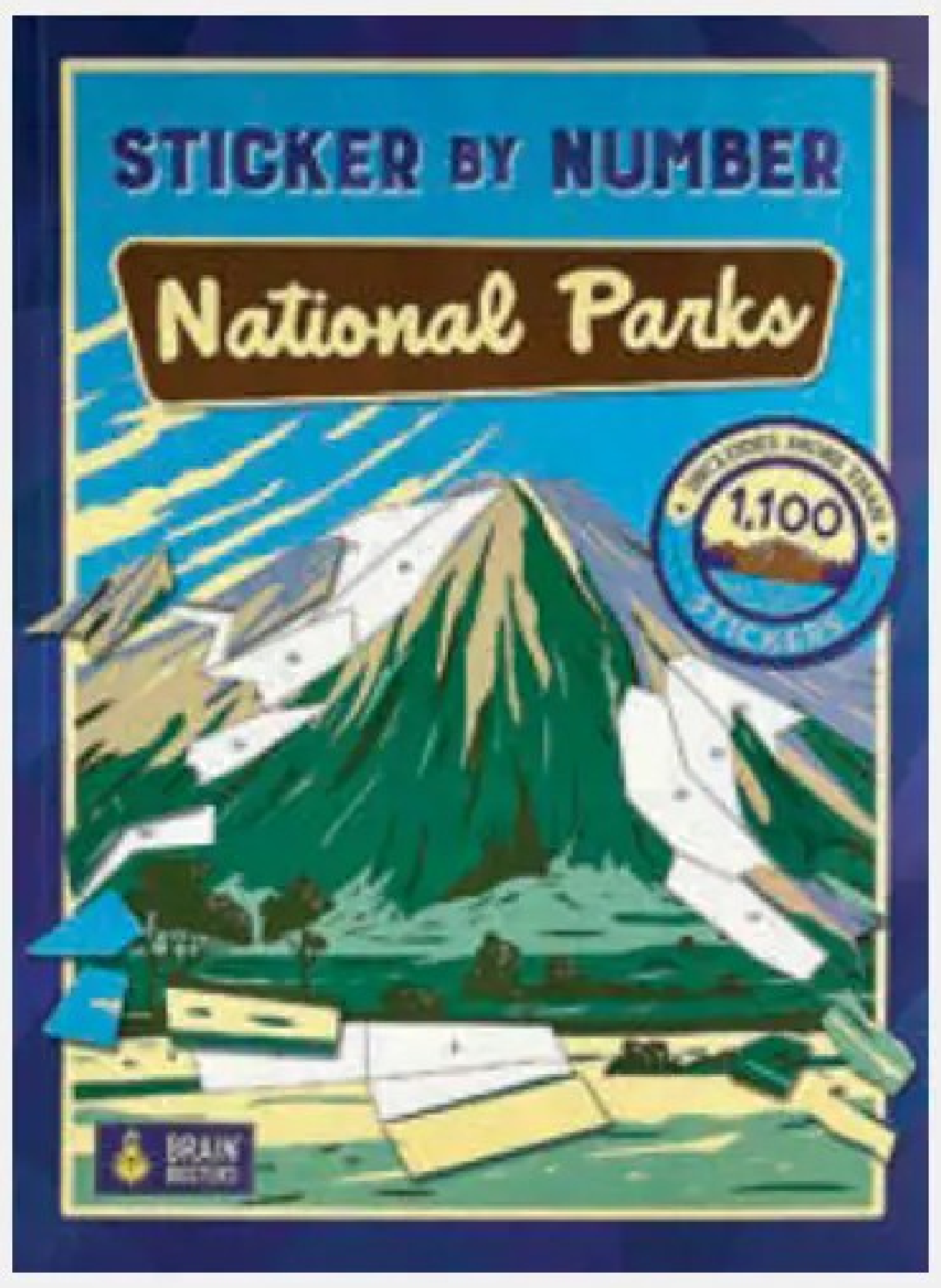
Snap-happy kiddos on an adventure, rejoice! This Instant Print Camera designed especially for any little aspiring Ansel Adams is the perfect travel sidekick. Understanding the instructions is a piece of cake for children—and for their adults, too. A quick demo or two and—*voilà!*—your tiny tots will be out snapping like pros. The screen is like a magic mirror, showing the picture before it pops into existence.

If you expect this camera to print out Picasso-worthy pictures, that ain't happening. The images are low resolution and black and white. Old Polaroids produced better photos. But the print quality isn't the point with this camera. This tool is meant to excite children with the instant gratification of seeing their photographic masterpieces.

The Instant Print is affordable, and the order arrives with a bonus—three rolls of paper right out of the box. It's Mother Earth approved too, thanks to rechargeable batteries, because even cameras need to refuel. Here's a gift tip—get this for your munchkins and let them freeze those 2025 epic family road trip moments into cute li'l Kodak moments.

—CAMI BECKER





Kids Camera

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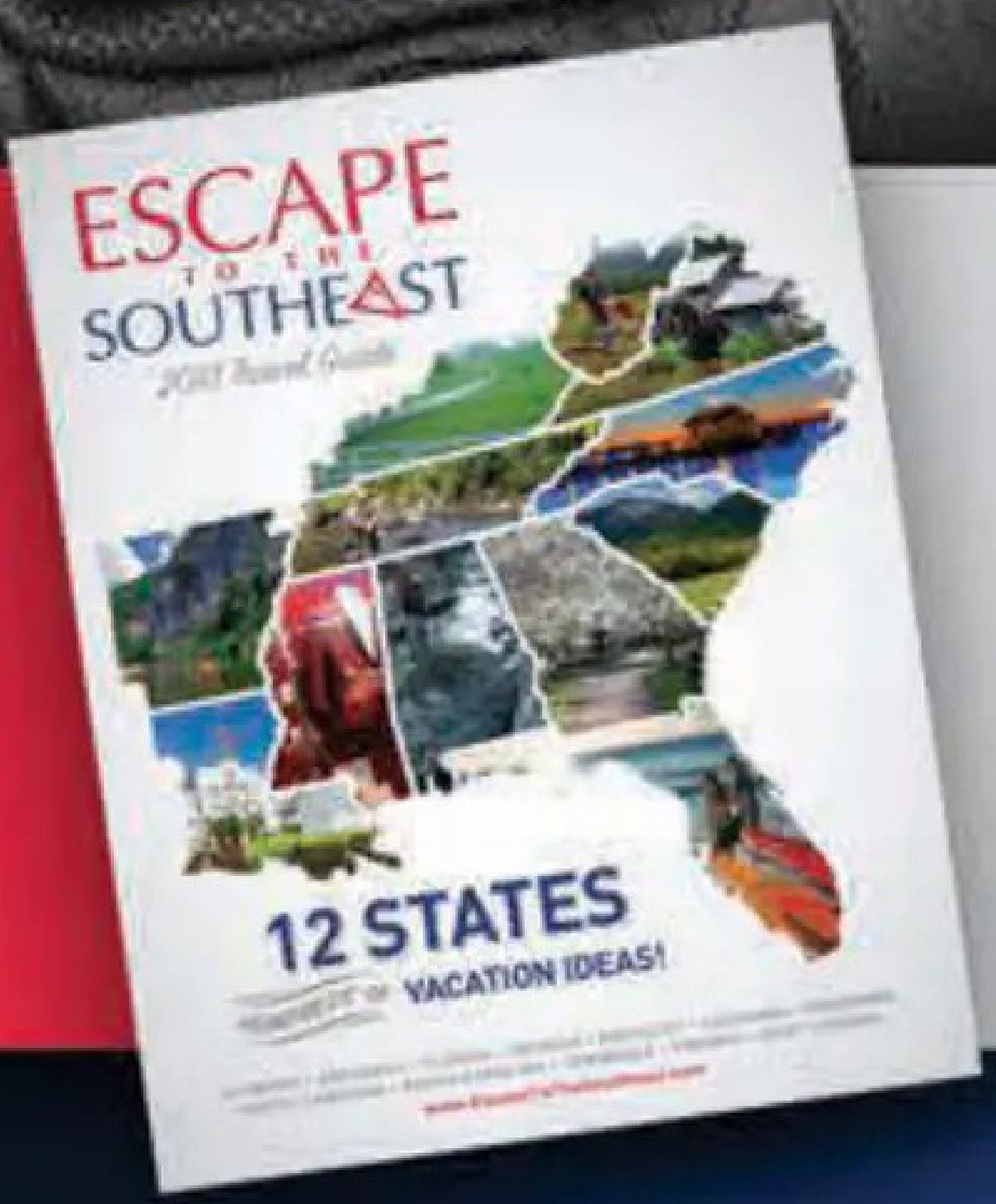
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# FOOD FINDS: CULINARY TRADITIONS IN LAKE CHARLES, LA.

Food and drink are Louisiana's equivalence to heart and soul. And, there are tons of passionate chefs and entrepreneurs thriving in Lake Charles, LA, with new local culinary treats worthy of the trip. You can dive into Louisiana's culture with spices and recipes that have been simmering in kitchens for centuries. People love food in Southwest Louisiana, and that means, the expectations are high.

While you are in the area, you can experience a variety of brunches or lunches with musical options.  Saturdays, soak in the Creole culture and Zydeco music by local artists such as Sean Ardoin, Rusty Metoyer & the Zydeco Krush and more. You'll be able to dance off the calories in no time!

A restaurant and live music venue, Luna Bar & Grill, offers a jazz brunch on Sundays. You can try out other creative brunches at resorts or another downtown tradition, Pujo St. Café in Lake Charles. Or, for a quiet breakfast spot with local products and organic coffee, The Bekery offers quiet options to relax with friends and family.

For truly authentic, Southwest Louisiana experiences, you can taste boudin from the Southwest Louisiana Boudin Trail. Boudin is one of the area's favorite finger foods, and the delicacy comes in a variety of flavors and formations - from fresh, hot links to deep, fried boudin balls. Boudin is considered a staple snack in the southern regions of the bayou state and is made of varying amounts of pork meat, liver, rice, onions, parsley and dry seasonings like salt, red pepper, black pepper and garlic powder.

After eating boudin, you definitely need something to whet your whistle. Crying Eagle Brewing Co. is one of the newest additions to the Southwest Louisiana Craft Brews and Spirits Trail, and their beers are delicious! A local favorite is the crisp, rice lager "Louisiana Lager." Crying Eagle also has an outdoor beer garden and live music. Other finds along the Southwest Louisiana Brews & Spirits Trail include Bayou Rum, Yellow Fin Vodka and Acadian Coffee Roasters. Many local restaurants and eateries carry these products or even incorporate them into their recipes, such as Pops & Rockets Gourmet Ice Cream in downtown Lake Charles!

There are many traditions in Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana. It's every foodie's dream come true! More incredible foodie experiences can also be found in the area's four casino complexes with Delta Down's Racetrack Casino & Hotel to the Isle of Capri or the two premier resorts side-by-side, L'Auberge Casino Resort and Golden Nugget Lake Charles. Award-winning chefs present creative masterpieces, and the flavors and excitement truly showcase the elegant dining selections to casual options in the South's Premier Gaming Resort Destination.

In addition to all of these delicious options, you can also visit Gulf beaches and wildlife refuges found along the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road, one of only 43 All-American Road designated scenic byways in the USA!

**Lake Charles is truly a world apart.**
**Learn more and plan your visit today at *VisitLakeCharles.org*.**

# THE EXTRA MILE

GOING THE DISTANCE TO VISIT DESTINATIONS OFF THE BEATEN PATH

• BY BOB CURLEY

## "Laverne & Shirley's Brewery"

Milwaukee's famous Lakefront Brewery will let nearly any Schlemiel or Schlimazel take its brewery tour, but you have to be pretty lucky to score the honor of placing a glove on a beer running down the bottling line, *Laverne & Shirley*-style.

The Yiddish shout-out to the clumsy and luckless that opened every episode of the famous 1970s sitcom based in Brew City is echoed in a tongue-in-cheek experience where the jokes flow as freely as the beer served on the tour, which includes an enthusiastic (if occasionally off-key) group rendition of the show's theme song, "Making Our Dreams Come True."

The tour also includes the brewing kettles, fermentation room, cellar, and other parts of the production process; at the conclusion, a brewery King and Queen are named, though the criteria for the honor change according to the guides' whims and the group's demeanor. The experience is geared toward adults; parents who want to bring their kids are forewarned that there are likely to be several "bung" jokes referencing the name of the old-style plugs for beer barrels.

"We start the tour with a beer so people have something to do while we're running our mouths," says Matt Krajnak, Lakefront's head of sales and marketing.

Founded in 1987, the brewery isn't quite as vintage as the hit television show, but it was a dream come true for brothers Russ and Jim Klisch. Homebrewing was still in its infancy when Russ gave his brother a book on brewing his own beer; impressed with the resulting brew, Russ decided he could do better, and the good-natured competition ultimately led the beer-loving bros to launch one of the state's first microbreweries inside a former bakery that stood in Milwaukee's Riverwest neighborhood.

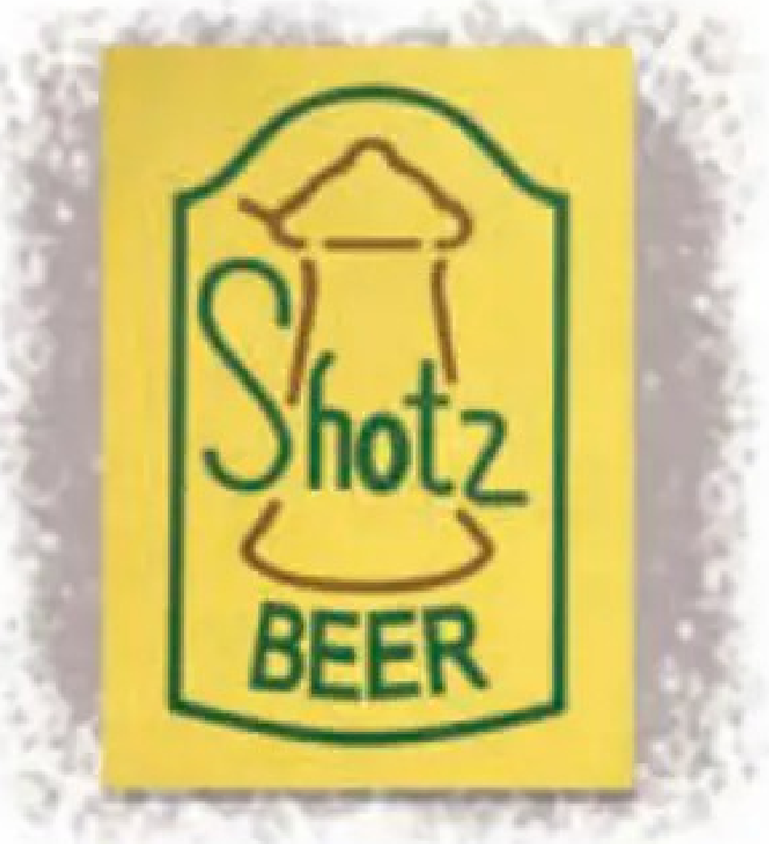
"When they first started, the brothers were motivated because the Miller Brewing Company was talking about moving its production line out of Milwaukee," recalls Krajnak. "Russ and Jim said, 'Wait a minute.... We can't have Brew City with no brews!'"

**LAKEFRONT BREWERY** is located at 1872 North Commerce Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 53212. For more information, visit lakefrontbrewery.com or phone (414) 372-8800.

Russ and Jim enjoyed remarkable success. As beer production boomed, Lakefront Brewery (which, for the record, never actually stood on the shores of Lake Michigan) relocated from its humble first home to its present site alongside the Milwaukee River. Contrary to tourist expectations, the big, circa-1908 building that now houses the brewery had never previously been connected to the city's long and storied tradition of beer-making: Instead, it had formerly served a coal-fired power plant for the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company.

Laverne & Shirley

**CALLING THE SHOTZ:** [Left] Cindy Williams and Penny Marshall starred in *Laverne & Shirley*, a 1970s sitcom that followed the adventures of two single women working at Milwaukee's Shotz Brewery in the 1950s and 1960s. The name of the show's fictional brewery was inspired by the real-life Schlitz and Blatz brewing companies—two Cream City institutions with long histories of bottling beer.



"There was twenty years' worth of dirt in the building when they got there," Krajnak says.

Cleaned up and significantly enlarged over the years (more recent additions include an outdoor riverside patio that operates year-round, thanks to heated seating in enclosed "Hop Houses"), the building makes a worthy stand-in for the fictitious Shotz Brewery so central to the *Laverne & Shirley* storyline—where best friends and roommates Laverne DeFazio and Shirley Feeney worked. Fans of the show will remember several shots of a bottling line prominently featured in the show's opening credits. In real life, those sequences were filmed on a bottling line installed inside Miller's Milwaukee brewery, but the bottling line was later sold to Lakefront and remains in use there today.

Schlitz may have claimed to be the "Beer that Made Milwaukee Famous," but the fictitious Shotz arguably did just as much to put the city on the map. And while Schlitz's suds are all but forgotten, *Laverne & Shirley* fans continue to flock to the city to take part in themed tours inspired by the show.

### Hops and Dreams

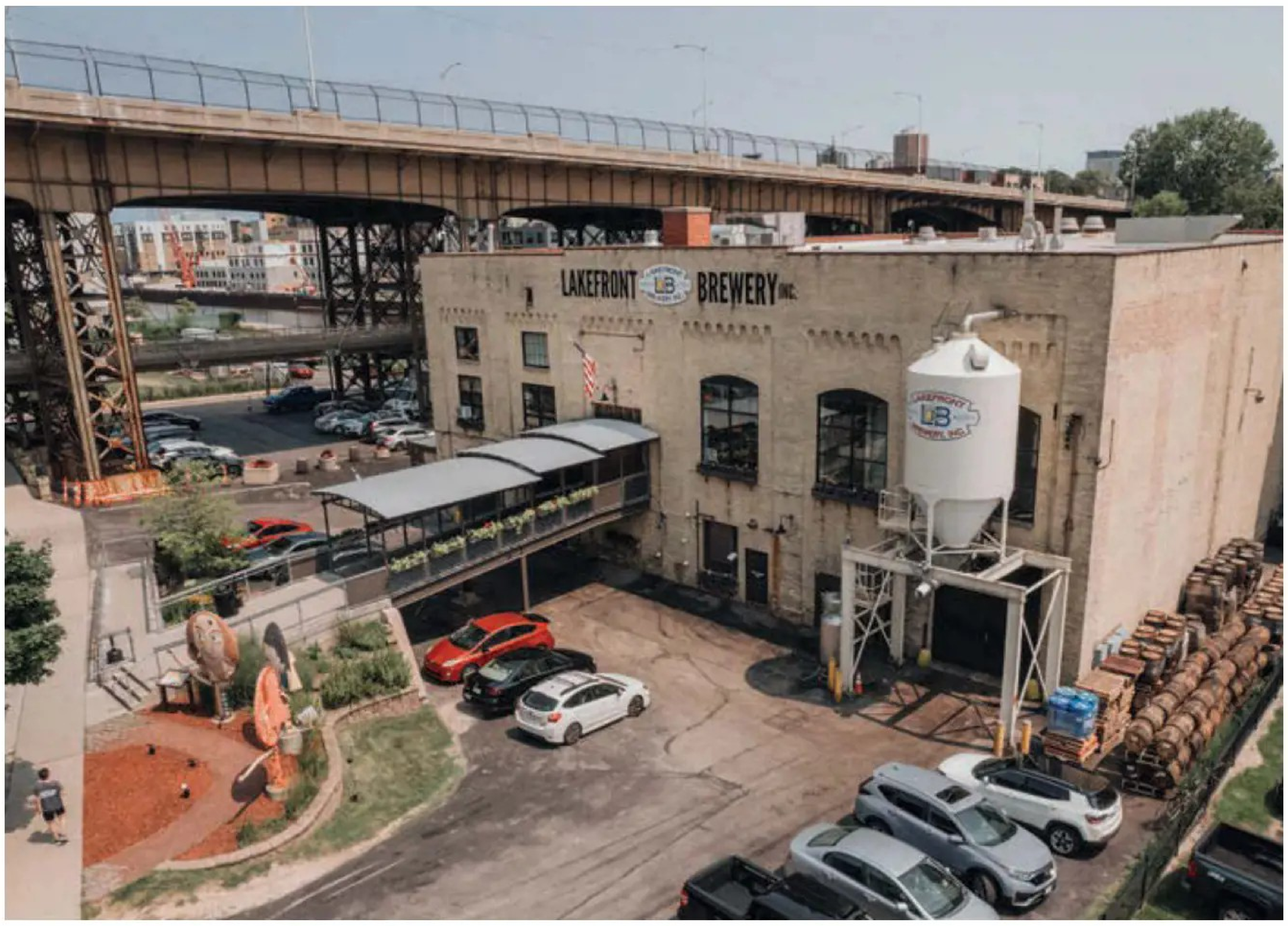
Lakefront Brewery isn't all about nostalgia, however: The brewery has often found itself on the cutting edge of big industry trends. Such were the times it crafted the country's first certified organic and gluten-free beers.

"We were the first brewery in Wisconsin to make a pale ale since Prohibition," notes Krajnak. From brewing under one hundred barrels of beer during the late 1980s, the brewery now produces 30,000 barrels annually, crafting 180 varieties of beer (and counting)over the years. Top sellers include its India Pale Ale, the New Grist Gluten-Free Pilsner-Style, and the brewery's flagship River West Stein Amber Lager.

Milwaukee is a great city full of interesting places to eat and drink (including some authentic local pizza joints like the one owned by Laverne's father in the show), but if you want a one-stop immersion into Badger State culture, you could do far worse than spending a day at the Lakefront.

Any visit begins with the beer, of course: the lagers and Bierzeit ("beer time") Kölsch-Style brew hearken to the city's German heritage, while the Bumble Bear Honey Brown Ale is flavored with real Wisconsin honey.

Lakefront Brewery photos courtesy Lakefront Brewery.



**WEEKENDS AT BERNIE'S:** Visitors touring the Lakefront Brewery pass by a large phony beer mug [bottom]. The tankard was once part of Bernie's Chalet [below], a set piece used by the mascot of the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team at County Stadium in 1973. [Left] The chalet's original *Fachwerkhaus* is now also installed at the brewery.

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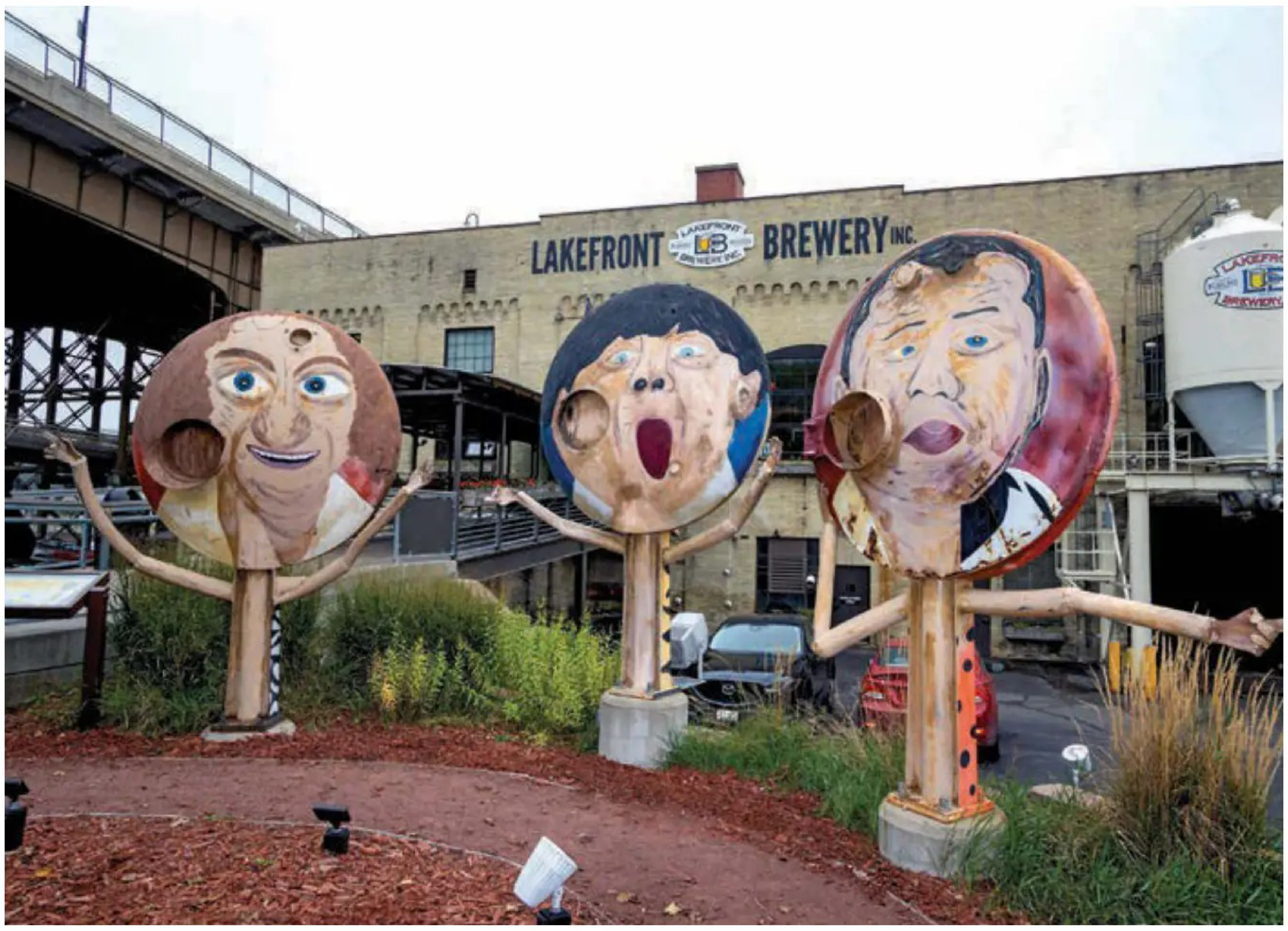
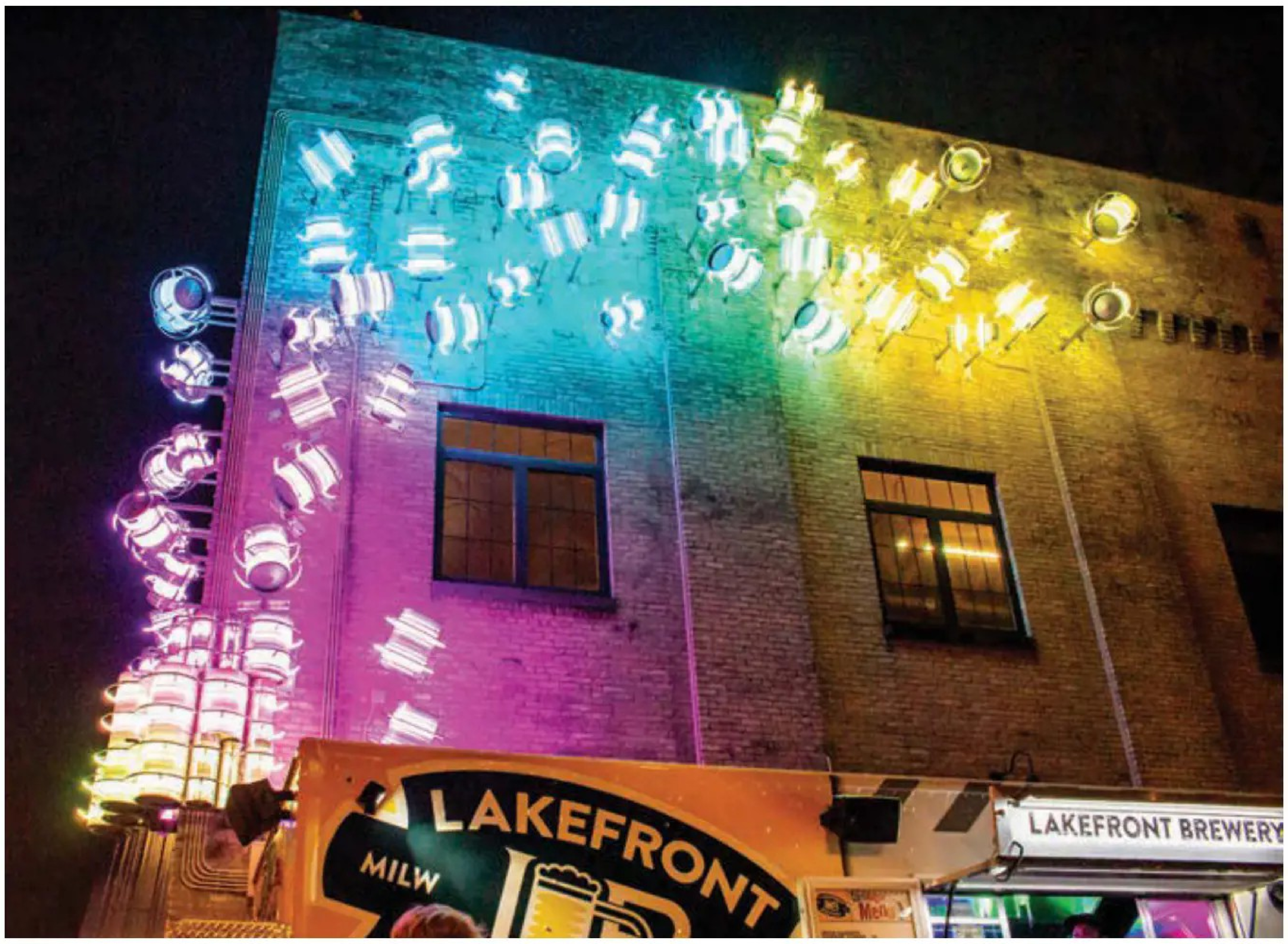


**THREE IN THE YEAST:** [Left] In 2011, Lakefront Brewery unveiled metal outdoor sculptures of the Three Stooges. The artworks were repurposed kettle murals that had been painted on original brewery vats that founders Russ and Jim Klisch named Larry, Moe, and Curly. [Above] The real-life Stooges had turned brewmasters themselves in their 1946 film *Beer Barrel Polecats*.

**KEG KONG:** [Left and above] Lakefront Brewery tours show the curious what can artfully be accomplished with brew and storage vats, but nothing prepares the eyes for the holiday-night light show called *Kegnado* [below]. Its dozens of brightly-lit kegs are arranged on the building's façade to create the illusion they are being tossed into the air by a cyclone.



The bar in the expansive Beer Hall will pour you Wisconsin's unique take on the Old Fashioned cocktail, made with Korbel Brandy and mixed with pop (soda, to soft drink consumers not raised in the Midwest), sour mix, or Lakefront's own house-brewed root beer.

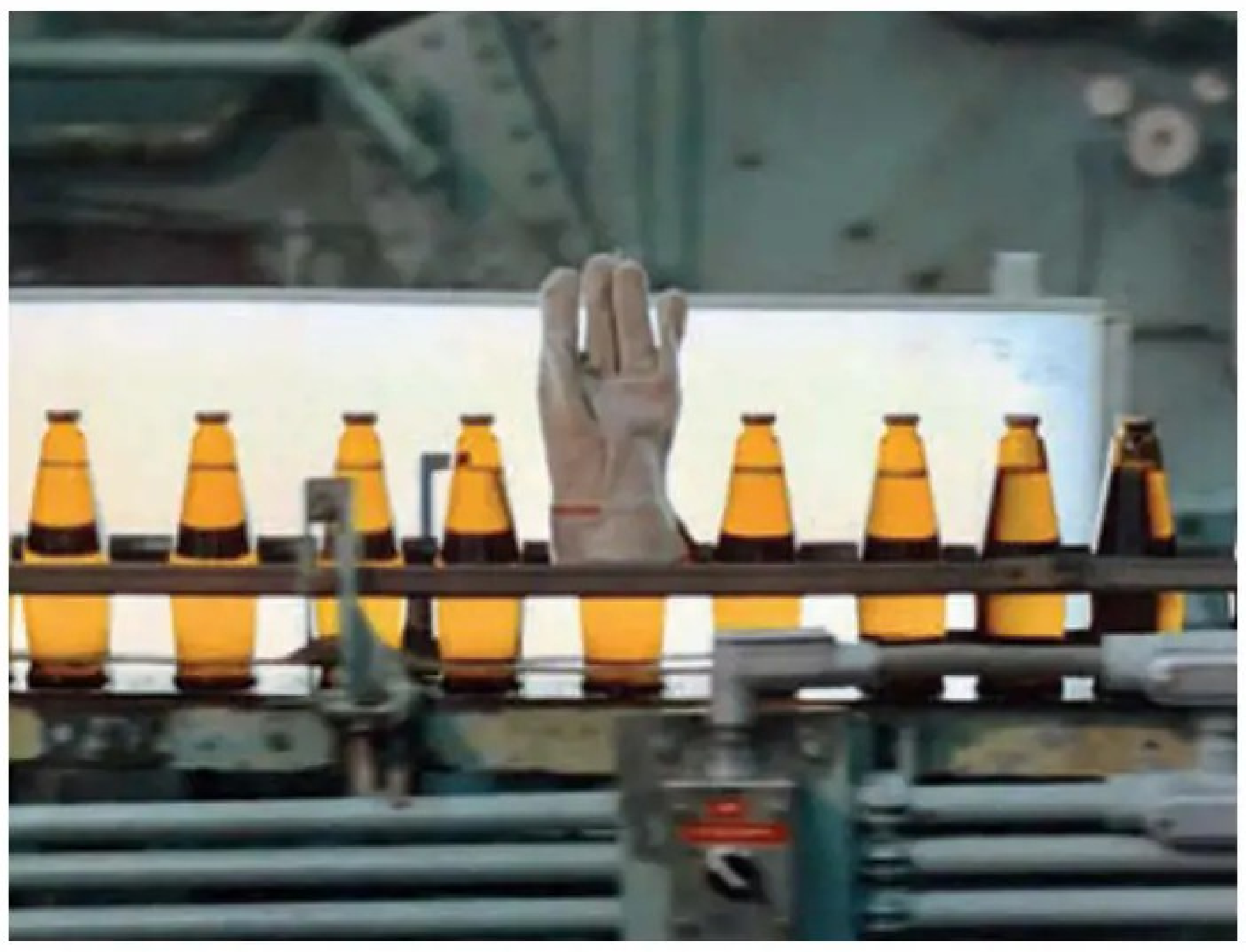
Laverne and Shirley likely would have rejected Lenny and Squiggy and just gone together for dinner in Bernie's Chalet, the brewery's romantic date-night venue offering dining for two overlooking the fermentation cellar. The chalet is actually a set piece that was used by Bernie Brewer, the mustachioed mascot of the Milwaukee Brewers baseball team, at County Stadium in the 1970s.

The comedy continues outside, where a trio of retired fermentation kegs are painted in the likenesses of the Three Stooges. This piece of popular public art, fashioned by local sculptor Paul Bobrowitz, also has roots in Lakefront's past: the names Larry, Moe, and Curly were originally given to the vats to keep straight what was brewing where.

## Beer and Pretzels

Wisconsin's food traditions are well represented at Lakefront Brewery. You don't need to be a "Cheesehead" to appreciate the state's affinity for cultured dairy products, and Lakefront has built a reputation for making some of the best beer-battered cheese curds in Milwaukee, served in the dining room with ranch dressing for dipping or from the brewery's rolling CurdWagon food truck.

Oversized pretzels are another homage to German immigrants, while the Poles get their moment in the sun with smoked kielbasa served solo or over mac and cheese.



**BOTTLE CAPPER:** [Right] The most popular stop on a Lakefront Brewery tour is the bottling line bought from the defunct Schlitz Brewery—the same line featured in the opening credits of *Laverne & Shirley*. In those credits, Laverne famously sends one of Shirley's gloves winding along the line atop a bottle. [Right, bottom] Lakefront Brewery tours recreate the moment for fans.

GLUTEN-FREE
SANS GLUTEN
NEW GRIST

Catholic "meatless Fridays" inspire a Friday night fish fry featuring polka music and yellow perch pulled fresh from the waters of Lake Michigan.

Lakefront Brewery is widely celebrated for its annual Halloween bash, which sees staff going all out in costume and the brewery tours taking a haunting turn. Christmas is the season when Lakefront lights the *Kegnado*, a forty-foot-high sculpture attached to the façade of the brewery building. Constructed entirely of stainless steel beer kegs, the wall-hugging display (think of what might happen if a tornado touched down on the production floor) is lit with LED lights each winter. If Santa has worked up a thirst while passing through Milwaukee on Christmas Eve, you know he's telling Rudolph to make a pit stop here.

If you have to pick one day of the year to visit Lakefront, however, perhaps you should make that day Black Friday, when the brewery tours start at 8 A.M. and the Curd Wagon begins selling it treats even earlier. The festive occasion is marked annually with the release of a special beer—a barrel-aged Holiday Spice Lager or an Eastside Dark, for example—to act as a winter warmer.

"It's our alternative to shopping," Krajnak explains.

Laverne and Shirley would have been all over that—Schlemiel, Schlimazel, or no.

**BOB CURLEY** is a Rhode Island-based writer and a Roadside Contributor at AMERICAN ROAD.

Lakefront Brewery photos courtesy Lakefront Brewery.

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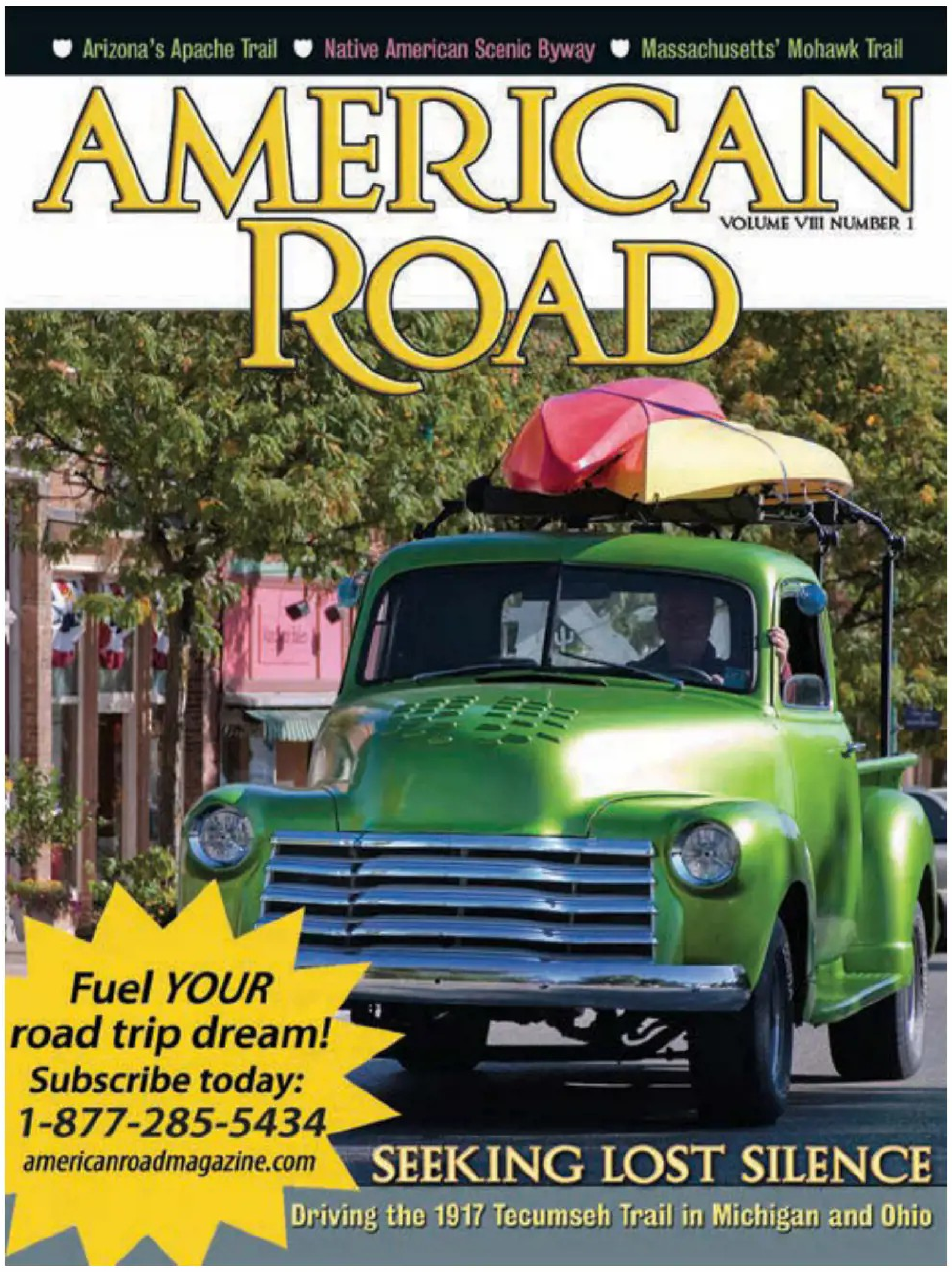

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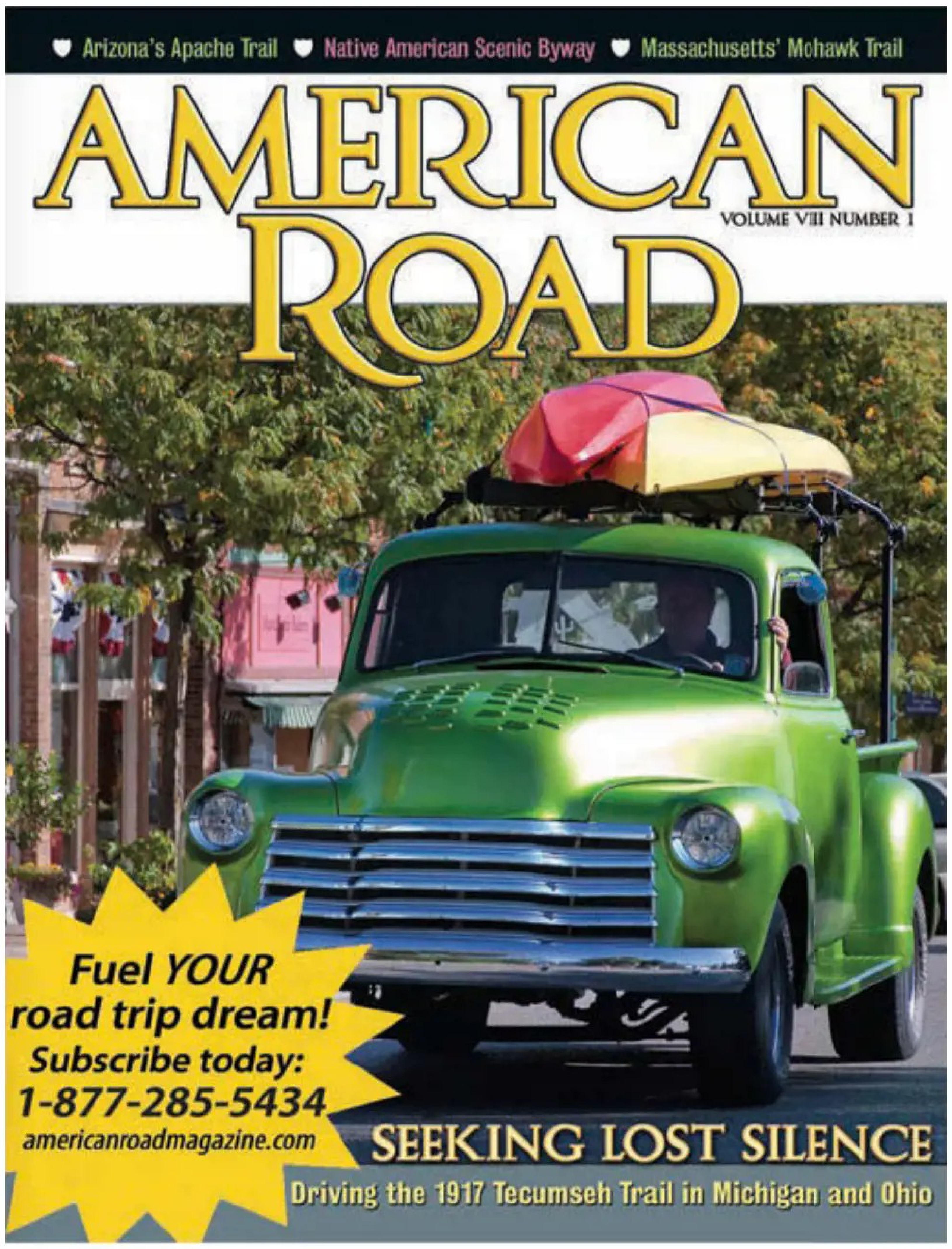
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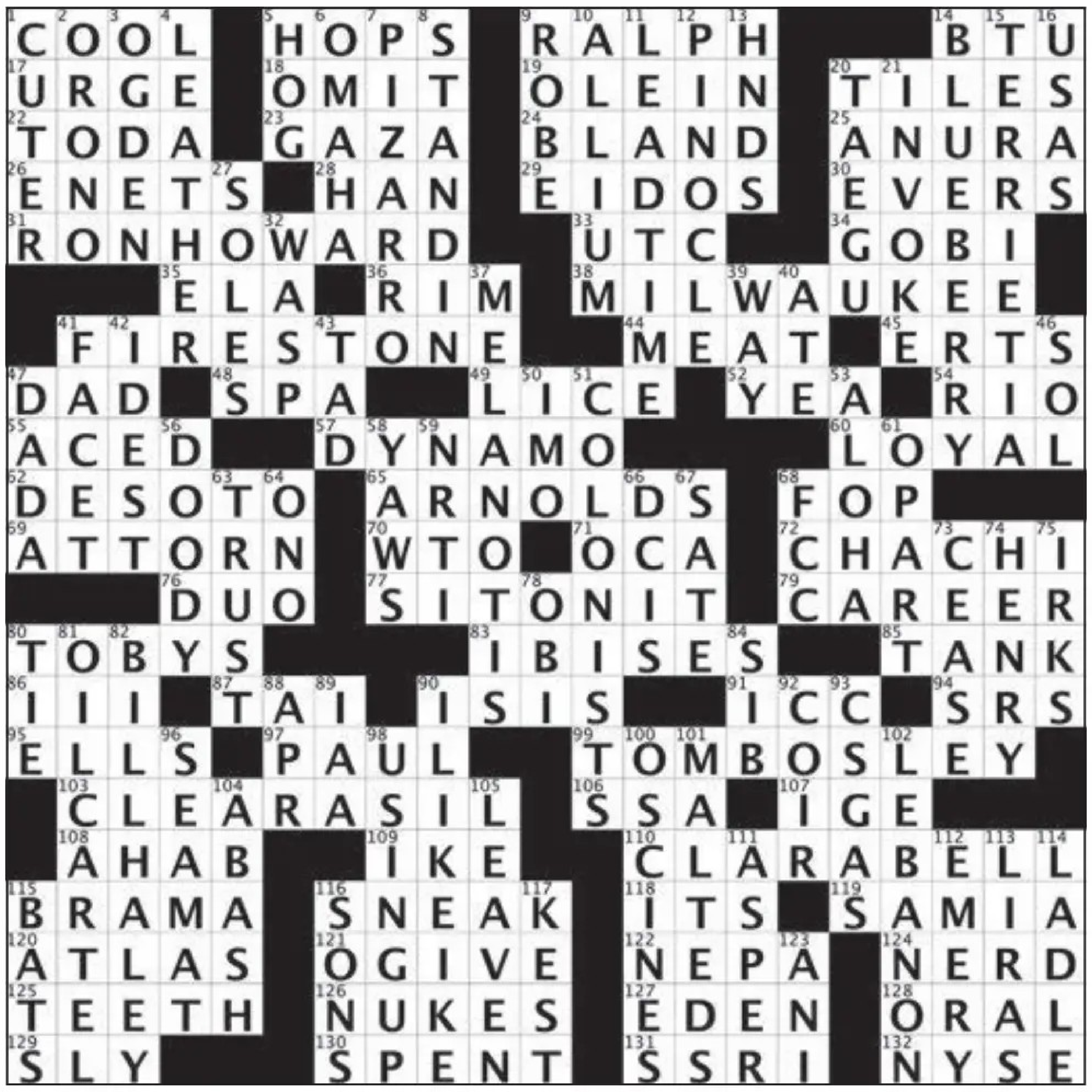

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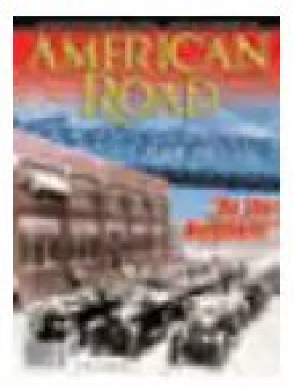

**Volume II, Number 1 (Spring 2004)**
Features include "Gimme 3C" (a tour of Ohio's 3C Highway) and "Highway 49er" (California Highway 49).
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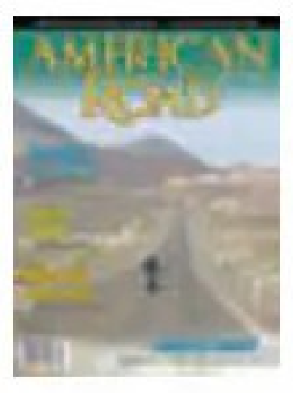

**Volume II, Number 3 (Autumn 2004)**
Features include "Drive Me Lonely" (Nevada US 50) and "The End of the Earth" (Arizona's Indian Highway 18).
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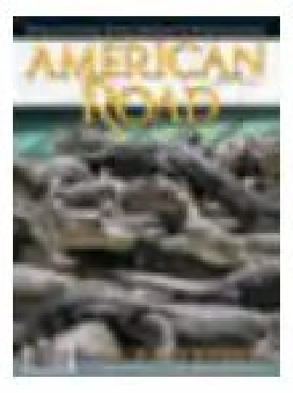

**Volume IX, Number 4 (Winter 2011)**
Features include "Orange Bowl" (Florida's Orange Blossom Trail) and "Cherries Jubilee" (Wisconsin's Door Peninsula).
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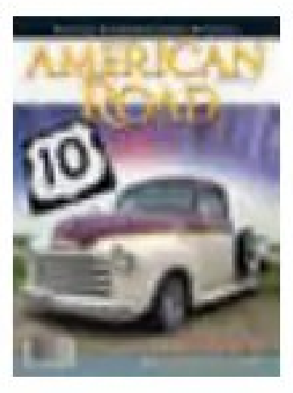

**Volume X, Number 4 (Winter 2012)**
Features include "US Highway 10" (Midland, Michigan, to Fargo, North Dakota) and "*American Road*'s Take Ten!"
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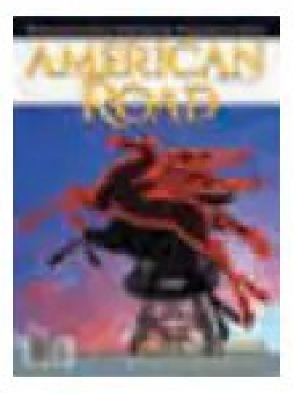

**Volume XI, Number 2 (Summer 2013)**
Features include "Electric Highway" (Forsyth to Missoula, Montana) and "Energy Loop Scenic Byway."
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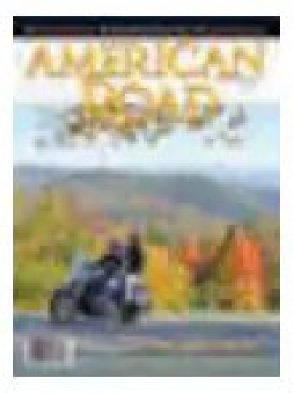
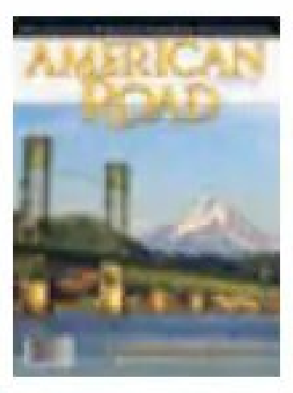
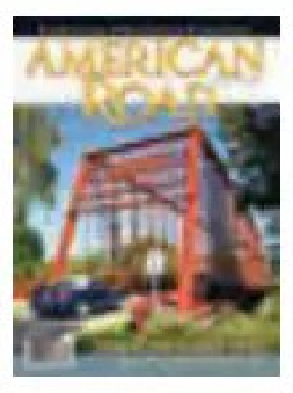


**Volume XI, Number 3 (Autumn 2013)**
Features include "Molly Stark Trail" (Vermont Route 9) and "Unsinkable! Molly Brown Route."
$10.95 + S&H*



**Volume XI, Number 4 (Winter 2013)**
Features include "Bank Shot" (Old Washington State Road Number 8) and "*American Road*'s Water Works."
$10.95 + S&H*



**Volume XII, Number 1 (Spring 2014)**
Features include "Wonderland Way"—an article that traces Indiana's early scenic route—and "Alice in Postcard Land."
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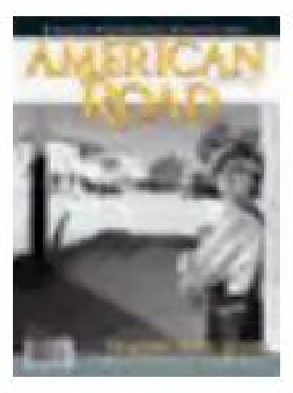

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Features include "Paper Moon"—a retracing of the 1973 film—and an interview with star Tatum O'Neal.
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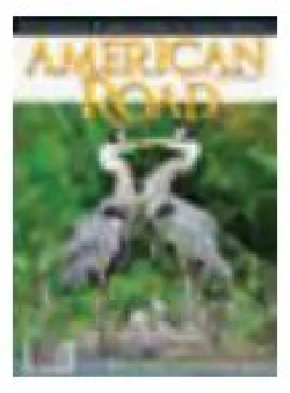
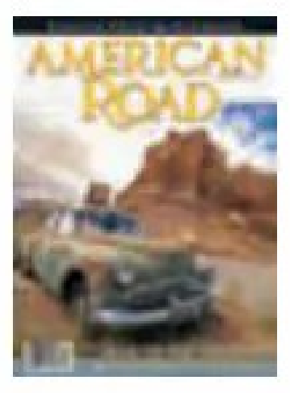


**Volume XII, Number 4 (Winter 2014)**
Features include "Watch the Birdies" (Louisiana's Creole Nature Trail) and the compendium "*American Road*'s Big Birds." $10.95 + S&H*



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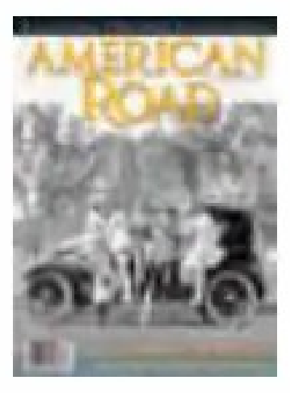
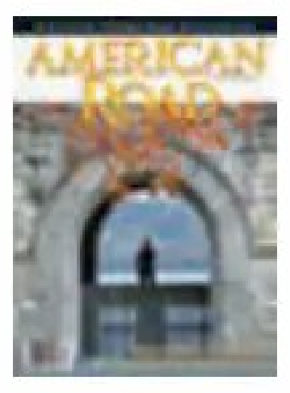


**Volume XIII, Number 2 (Summer 2015)**
Features include "Flicker Highway" (*American Road*'s Silent Movie Route), "Silent Star Cars," and "*American Road*'s Silent Era Films." $10.95 + S&H*



**Volume XIII, Number 3 (Autumn 2015)**
Features "*American Road*'s Washington Irving Route" and "*American Road*'s Top 12 Classic Travel Books."
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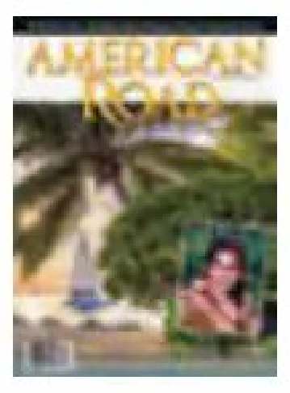

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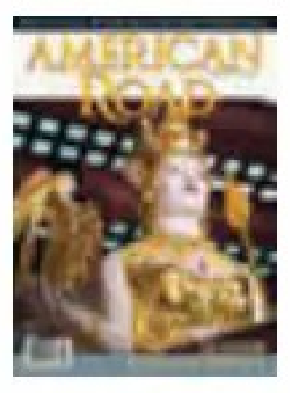

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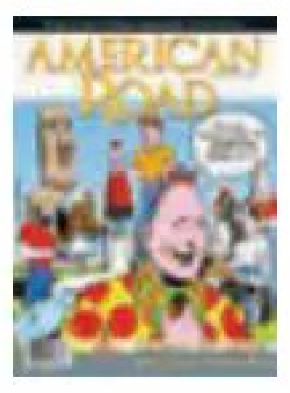

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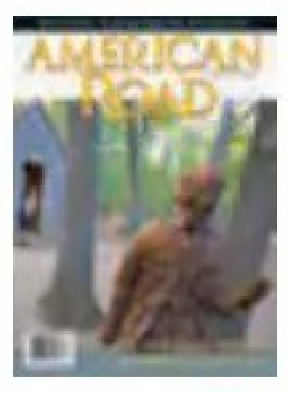

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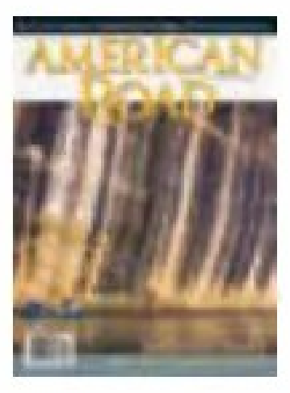

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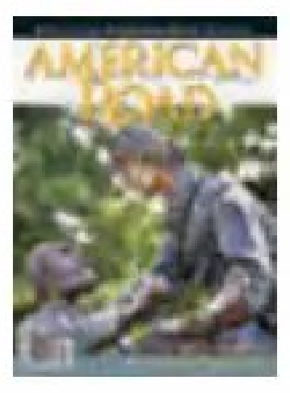

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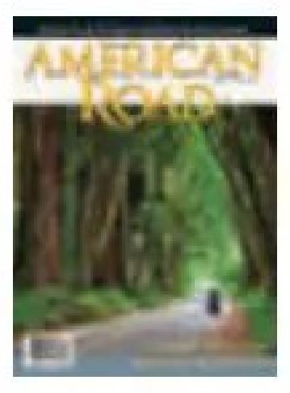

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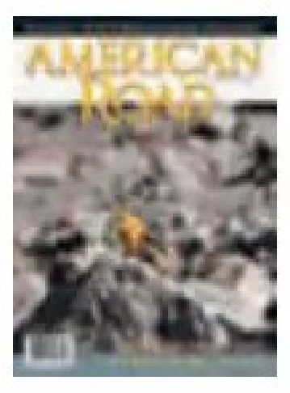
Features include "Celebrating the Tamiami Trail," "Last Stagecoach to Deadwood," "Thumb's Up!" (Driving Michigan's Thumb), and "Jurassic Lark." $10.95 + S&H*



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Features includes "McKenzie Highway," "Vermont Route 15," and "Trail of the Mountain Spirits Scenic Byway."
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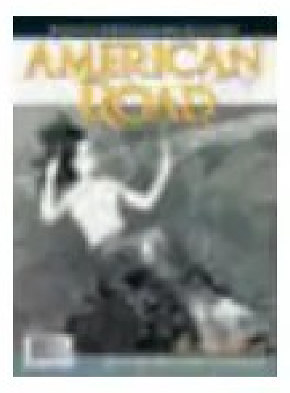

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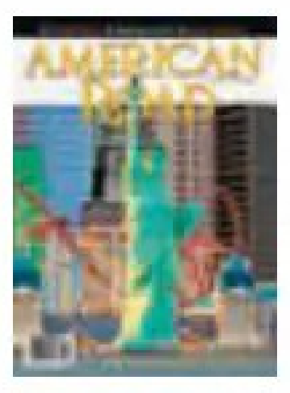
Features include "*American Road*'s Old Friends"—which revisits fifteen favorite roadside personalities—and the retrospective "Cover Stories." $10.95 + S&H*



**Volume XVI, Number 1 (Spring 2018)**
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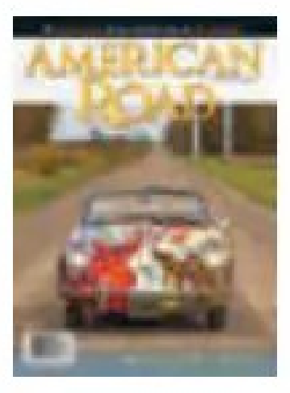

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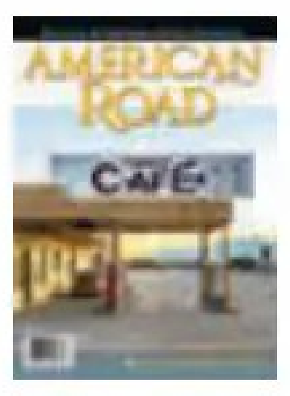
Features include "Rock Around the Road," "Vinyl Record Rides," and "Car Tunes"—musical odes to pink Cadillacs, red Corvettes, and one hot rod Lincoln. $10.95 + S&H*



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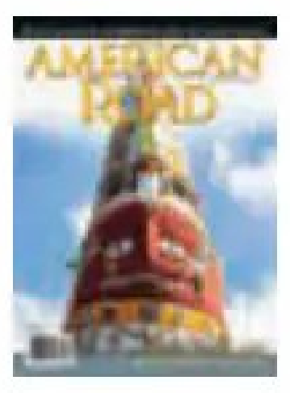

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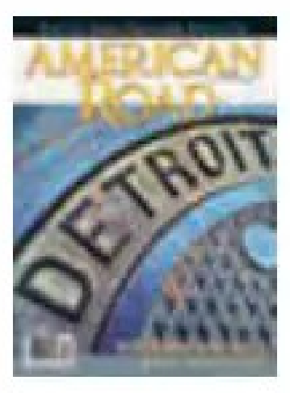
Features include "Three Artists in Search of the Slow Lane," "Totem Pole Park," and "*American Road*'s 'Picture-Perfect' Photography Contest." $10.95 + S&H*



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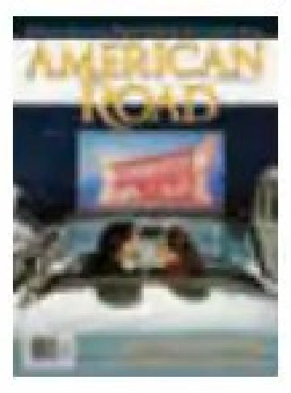

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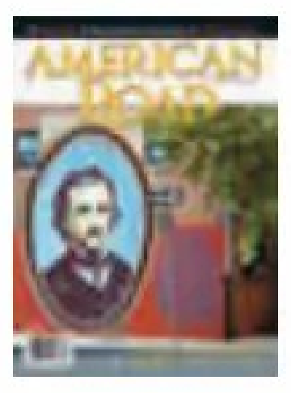

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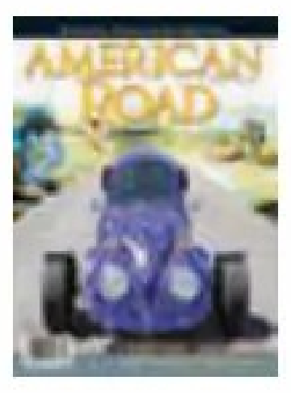
Features include "Finding Edgar"—our guide to Edgar Allan Poe locations—and "The Revisitations of Resurrection Mary." **$10.95 + s&h***



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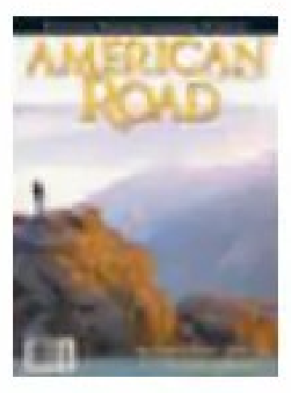

**Volume XVIII, Number 2 (Summer 2020)**
Features include "King of the Wild Frontier," "Through the Gap with Daniel Boone," and "It's Kit!""
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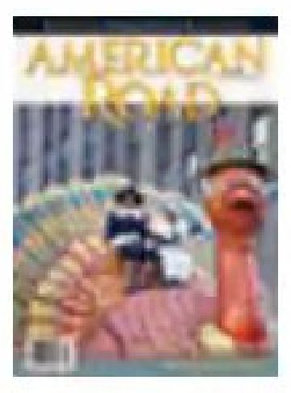

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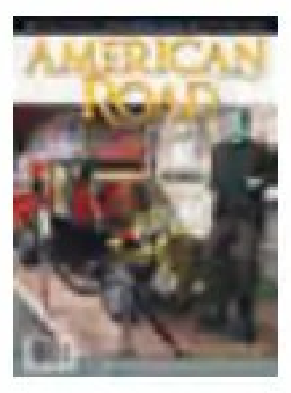

**Volume XVIII, Number 4 (Winter 2020)**
Features include an interview with Anson Williams, "Classic TV Cars," and "Don't Touch That Dial!" Photo Contest.
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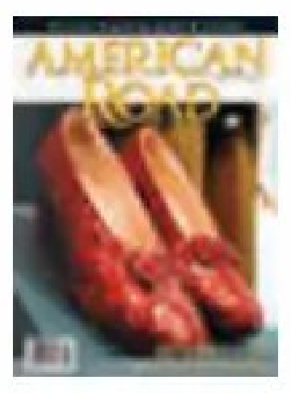

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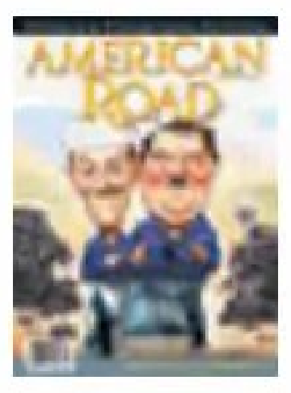
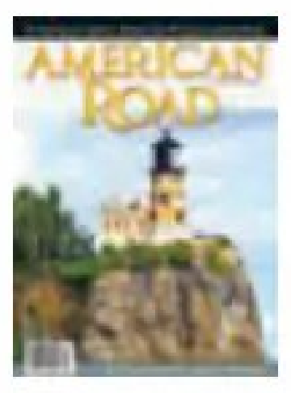


**Volume XIX, Number 2 (Summer 2021)**
Features include "The Three Stooges Go to Yellowstone," "American Road's Comedy Road Films," and an interview with Paul Reubens. **$10.95 + s&h***



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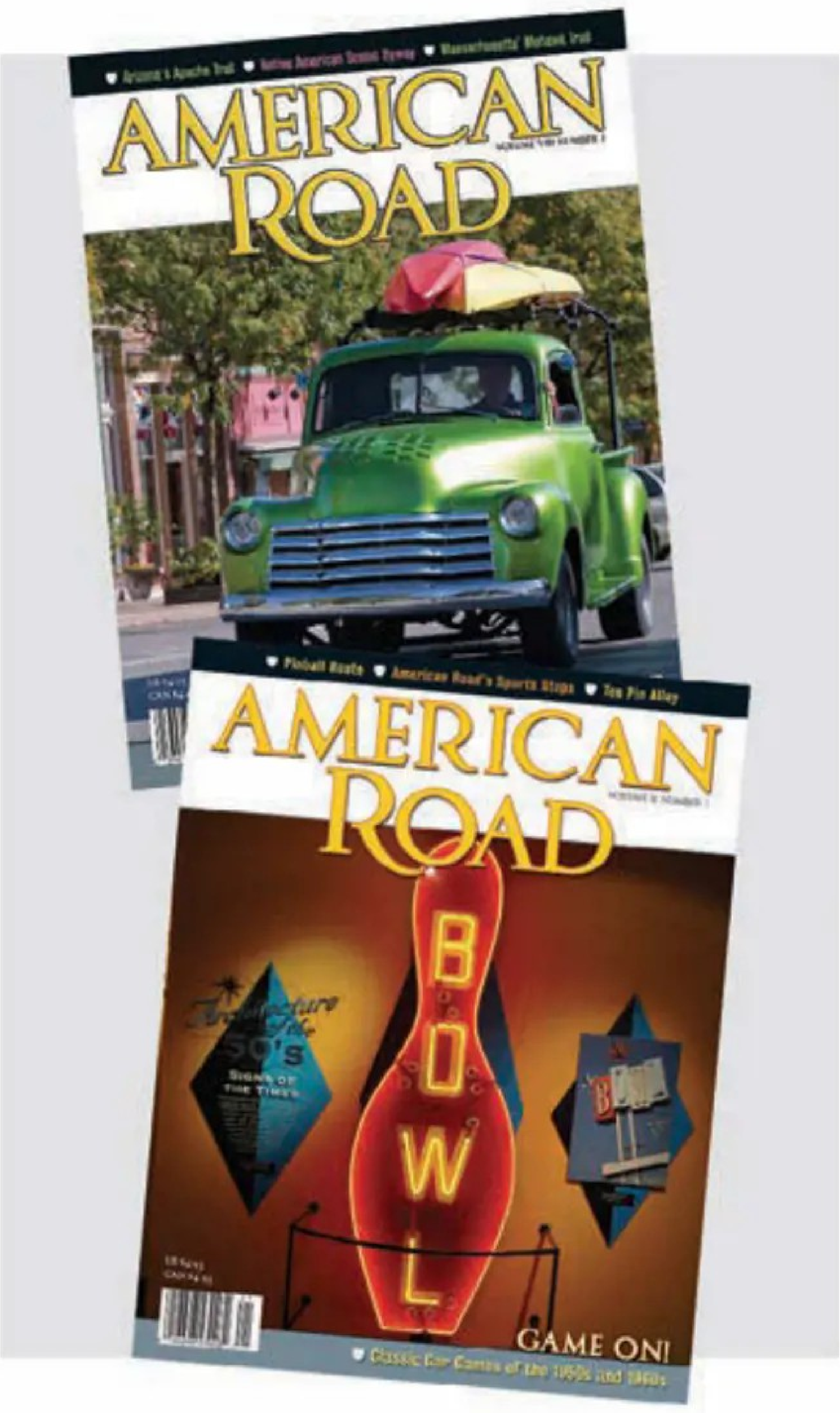

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This custom cooler bag is made of 300D polyester with insulated lining to keep snacks fresh and drinks chilled. It transforms into a duffle-style bag to more easily carry and store.

**11.8 × 7.1 × 11**
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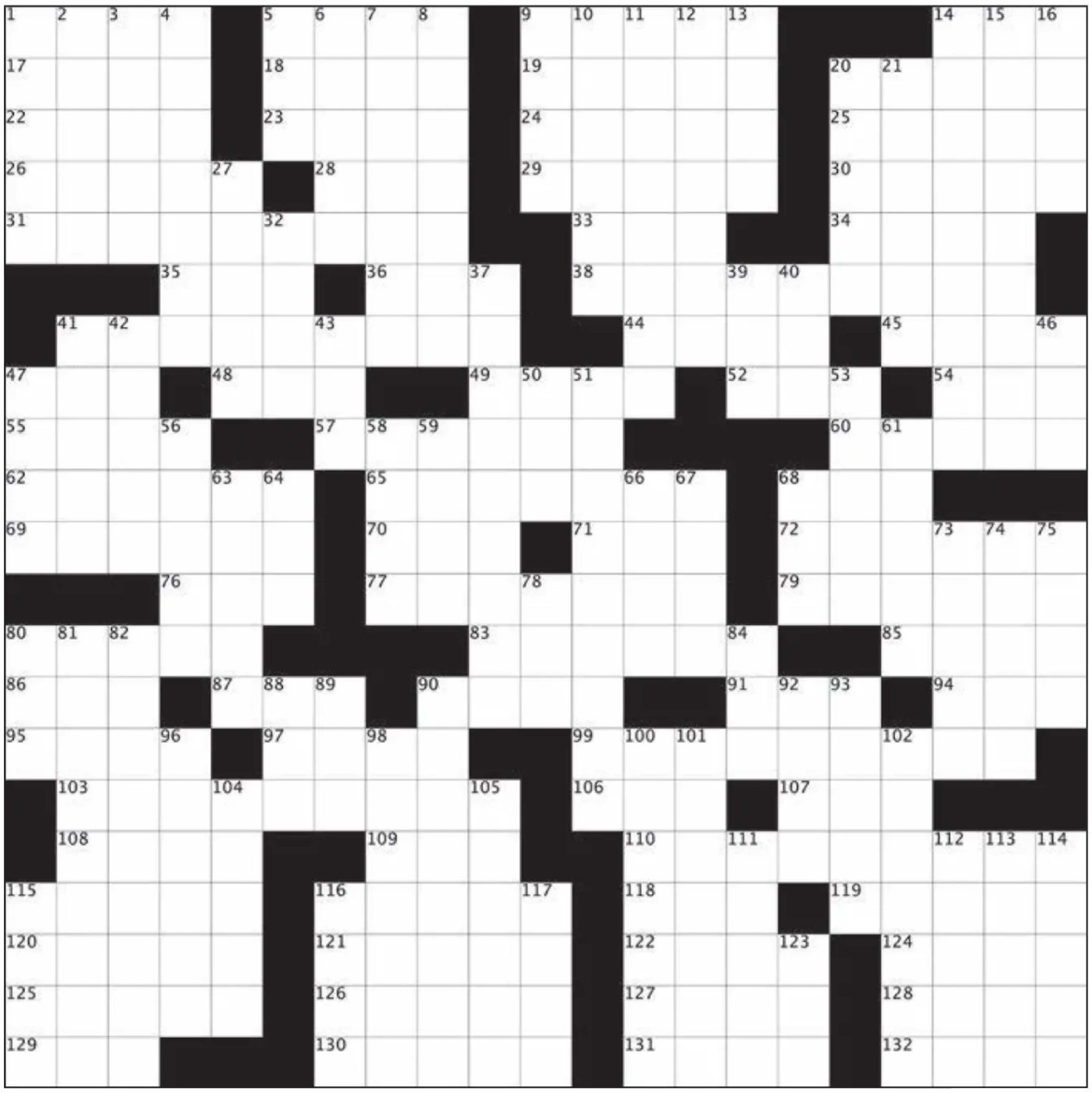
# AMERICAN CROSSROAD

## "Riding with Mr. C"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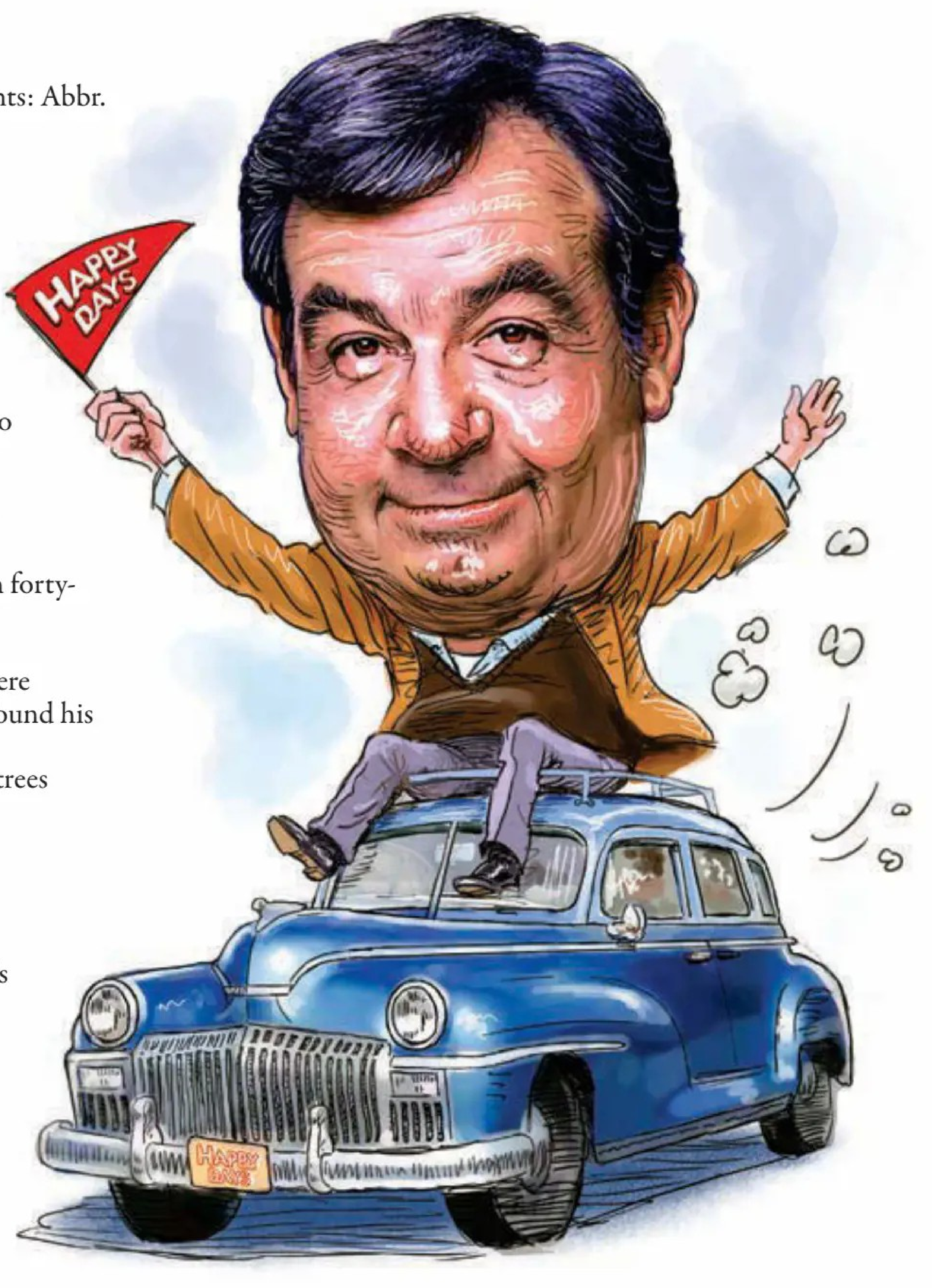
95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102
103 104 105 106 107
108 109 110 111 112 113 114
115 116 117 118 119
120 121 122 123 124
125 126 127 128
129 130 131 132

**ACROSS**

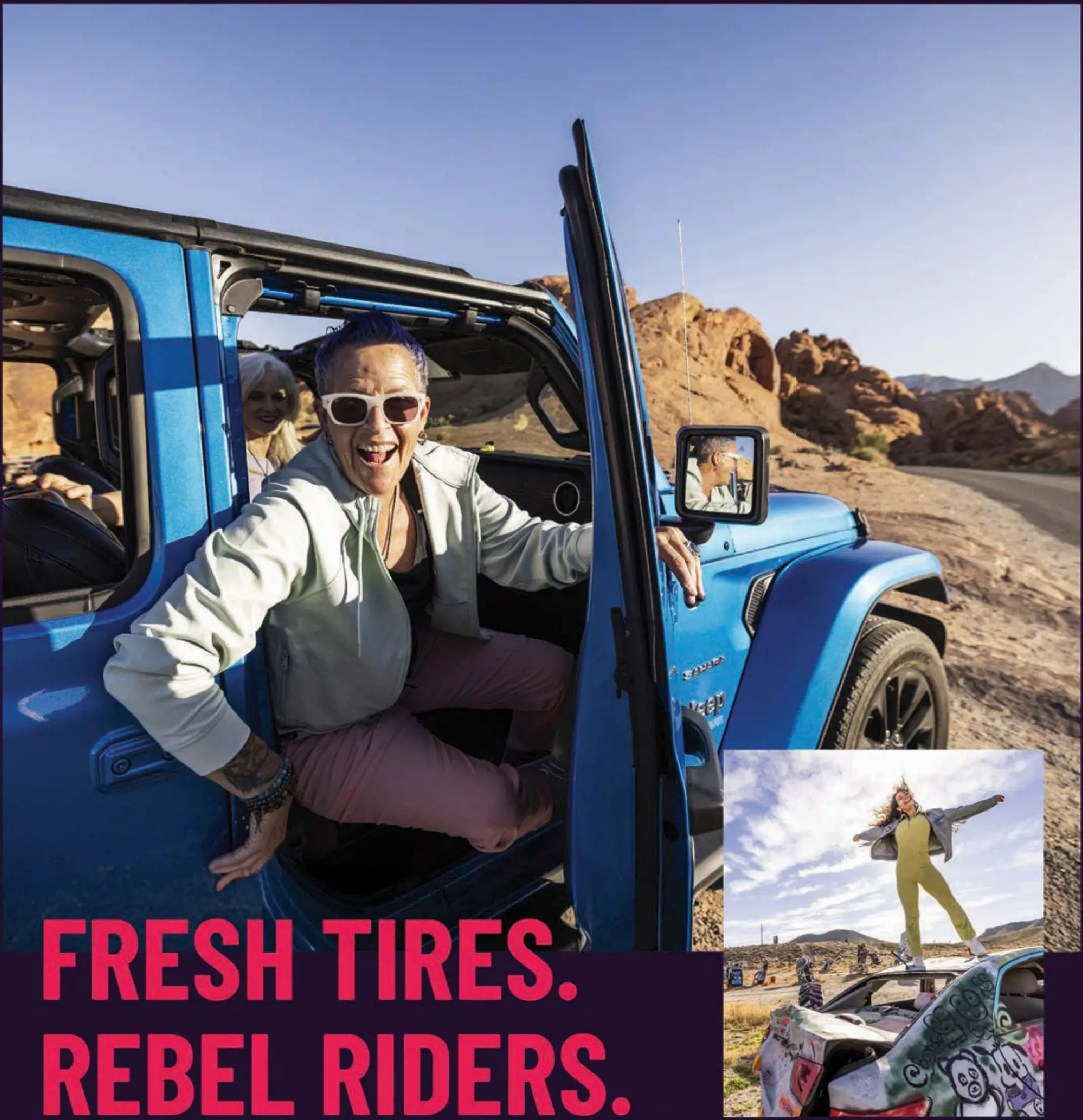
**1.** What Fonzie is
**5.** Dances with socks
**9.** A Malph
**14.** A/C unit
**17.** Passion
**18.** Cut
**19.** Oily liquid
**20.** Building material
**22.** All, in Argentina
**23.** Mediterranean port
**24.** Dull
**25.** Frog genus
**26.** Russian nomads
**28.** River in China
**29.** Formal content of a culture
**30.** Baseball great
**31.** Actor who played Richie Cunningham
**33.** Clock-setting std.
**34.** Desert
**35.** High note
**36.** Border
**38.** Mr. C's hometown
**41.** Big name in 1950s tires
**44.** Goes with potatoes
**45.** Urges on, in Scotland
**47.** Mr. C's role in the Cunningham family
**48.** Health haven
**49.** Insects
**52.** Thumbs-up
**54.** Sugar Loaf Mountain site
**55.** Easily passed
**57.** Hard worker
**60.** Unwavering
**62.** Mr. C's beloved car
**65.** *Happy Days* hangout
**68.** Dandy
**69.** Transfer to another
**70.** Global economic grp.
**71.** Edible root
**72.** The Arcola Joanie loves
**76.** Frank Sinatra and Doris Day
**77.** *Happy Days* catchphrase ofren directed at Potsie
**79.** Occupation
**80.** Jugs
**83.** Wading birds
**85.** Esso slogan: "Put a Tiger in Your ___"
**86.** Three on a sundial
**87.** Half a cocktail
**90.** Egyptian goddess
**91.** Govt. agency.
**94.** Some coll. students
**95.** Letters
**97.** Mr. Anka
**99.** Actor who played Mr. C
**103.** Big name in 1950s acne cream
**106.** New Deal org.
**107.** Ripen
**108.** *Moby Dick* captain
**109.** Hawaiian instrument
**110.** Clown of 1950s TV
**115.** Bream
**116.** Move stealthily
**118.** Common contraction
**119.** Silkworm moths
**120.** Book that will take you places?
**121.** Gothic-style arch
**122.** Neighbor of Tibet
**124.** Uncool person
**125.** Ipana targets
**126.** Reasons for a bomb shelter
**127.** John Stienback1952 novel *East of* ___
**128.** Mouth-to-mouth
**129.** Slippery
**130.** Beat
**131.** Class of antidepressants: Abbr.
**132.** Wall St. abbr.

**DOWN**

**1.** Easier on the eyes
**2.** Town in Maine
**3.** City in Utah
**4.** A Tuscadero
**5.** Harley-Davidson
**6.** City in Nebraska
**7.** Conquistador Francisco
**8.** Understudy
**9.** Ceremonial wear
**10.** Onion and leek genus
**11.** Reporter's concern
**12.** Card game played with forty-eight cards
**13.** Hundreds, for short
**14.** Fats Domino Hill (where Richie Cunningham found his thrill)
**15.** Small genus of timber trees
**16.** Vedic dawn goddess
**20.** City in South Korea
**21.** Call forth
**27.** Shoe parts
**32.** Picnic pest
**37.** Genus of mockingbirds
**39.** Direction
**40.** Dined
**41.** Attribute
**42.** Start of a court conclusiont
**43.** Tyke
**46.** Old ___
**47.** Bit of baby talk
**50.** "As I see it," in texts
**51.** Pioneers
**53.** ___ Bowl
**56.** Howdy of 1950s TV
**58.** Nautical term
**59.** Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors, for short
**61.** Painting style
**63.** Rely on
**64.** Lover of Lennon
**66.** Ductal Carcinoma in Situ, for short
**67.** Fill up
**68.** TV monitor
**73.** Stop
**74.** Mr. Winkler
**75.** Irritates
**78.** It's a wrap
**80.** Neckpiece
**81.** Seven Sisters
**82.** "Rock Around the Clock" singer and leader of the Comets
**84.** Sis or Bro
**88.** Calendar abbr.
**89.** A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots
**90.** 1952 party line
**92.** Rope fiber
**93.** Riot-control weapon
**96.** Crusty ocean growth
**98.** Depleting
**100.** Songbirds
**101.** Drinks sold at 65 Across
**102.** Mideast land
**104.** Humiliate
**105.** Lighten up
**111.** Regarding
**112.** Kind of board
**113.** Coins
**114.** Kitchen utensil
**115.** Brewers' clubs
**116.** Chuck and Richie to Mr. C
**117.** Scottish form of the name Christopher
**123.** "Wheel of Fortune" request


HAPPY DAYS
HAPPY DAYS

See page 108 for puzzle solution. For additional archived travel-themed puzzles, visit *americanroadmagazine.com/crossroad.*



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